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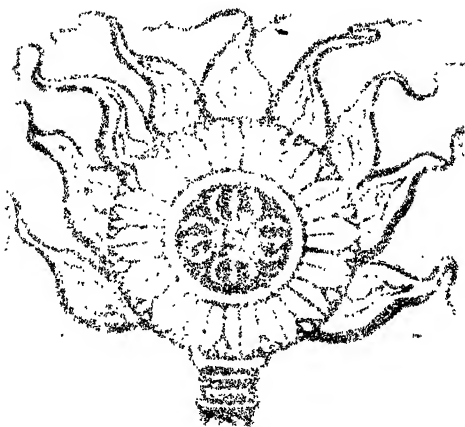




# TRIVENI

*Editor*

**K. RAMAKOTISWARA RAU**



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*Deputy Editor.*





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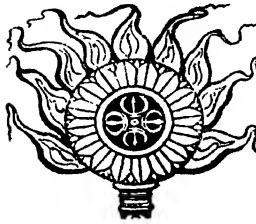




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## ETHICS AND POLITICS: THE MODERN CONCEPT

*By N. Raghunathan*

AT no time in recorded history was society more preoccupied with ethical questions than it is to-day. But it is equally safe to say that at no time was it less mindful of ethics in practice. Its preoccupation with ethics is of the same order as was the preoccupation of Milton's Satan with the Omnipotence that had deposed him; only the roles happen to be reversed in this case. We have in the atom bomb the apotheosis of brute force. But those who let it fall on Hiroshima—the policy-makers of Britain and America—were firmly convinced, so they declared, that it was necessary in order to end the war and thus prevent the prolongation of human suffering. But this official attitude was a sort of protective integument which covered a variety of conflicting mental reactions and emotions. Thus, those who prided themselves on their realism argued that if the Allies had not been the first to drop the bomb the Germans might have done the same, and in that case righteousness would have gone under. The mothers of America put it more crudely when they declared that if the bomb had not been used perhaps half a million more of their sons would have had to be sacrificed. They would never countenance that, when the war could be stopped by a few hundred thousand Japs being blown up; in any case there were too many of them. But in America as elsewhere there are men with a tender conscience; and it was stated the other day that a body of these were banding themselves to collect subscriptions for rebuilding Hiroshima and Nagasaki as far as possible, particularly the churches and schools, in order to bring the surviving Japs the consolations of religion and incidentally expiate their own guilt for the extermination in a split second of two fair and flourishing communities.

That is typical of the way the debate goes on on the entire moral front. On the one hand there are the fifty odd nations who compose the United Nations feverishly ranging themselves on one side or other for the third war, the inevitability of which everybody seems to take for granted. The war-time conscription of the most powerful intellects in the world of science in the cause of perfecting more and more formidable engines of destruction has now been placed on a permanent footing by the common if tacit consent of all nations which have the ambition and the resources to enter this competition. On the other side of the medal, you find the scientists themselves alternately wringing their hands in despair at the perversity of the Governments and the stupidity of the public, and sturdily declaring that they would oppose secrecy in regard to the bomb and other like missiles and at the same time educate the public to a realisation of the fact that civilisation stands on the brink of the abyss. Meanwhile the educationists, the

churches, the writers realise that the atom bomb is something catastrophically new and that humanity, if it wishes to survive, must come to some understanding about it. But like rabbits running round and round in a hutch they are for the most part unable to escape from the accustomed grooves of thought. We seem landed in an impasse all right.

But the cloud is not without a silver lining. The concept of One World is seeping slowly into the consciousness of humanity, still largely unorganised and distracted as it is. After all, the idea as an active aspiration has been before mankind for more than a generation now. Two shattering wars in this period may seem to have made mincemeat of the basic assumptions underlying this concept. The marvel is, however, not that Woodrow Wilson's League foundered, but that the United Nations Organisation came to be substituted in its stead. Just as the Sanctions clause proved the Achilles heel of the League Covenant, the Big Power veto may prove the undoing of the U.N.O. But even if that happens, it seems to me that like Robert Bruce we shall go on trying again and again till we establish something that will wear well and serve its purpose. This is not, let me say, wholly a question of faith. The will to survive is our most prominent characteristic as a species; and it may be expected to be most active when the danger is greatest. After all, the rule of law within settled communities, which we now take for granted, must have seemed in the infancy of mankind equally chimerical as an ideal.

It is in this context that the practice of active non-violence associated with the name of Mahatma Gandhi naturally comes to mind when one casts about for what may be described as the modern concept of the proper place of ethics in politics. Non-violence is, of course, nothing new. It is at least as old as the Buddha, if not older. But non-violent resistance as a political technique or a substitute for war, though it has been tried on a small scale and with a certain degree of success in one or two instances, as for instance by the Finns against the Russians in the first decade of the century, has in Gandhiji's hands become, for the first time, the instrument of emancipation of a great nation. And its success was in some measure due to the fact that it insisted on personal discipline and self-denial on the part of privates as well as captains in the non-violent army. That it triumphed sooner than had at one time appeared possible was no doubt due to other causes. Some may explain this on the assumption that the heart had gone out of the old Imperialism. Others may prefer to think, not that the leopard had changed its spots, but that the world set-up had so radically altered that the old type of exploitation was no longer possible. Yet others might point to the fact that other countries, for example Burma, had also got independence, though they do not swear by non-violence. But all that does not invalidate the finding that the idea of creative non-violence propagated by the Mahatma has, like the great movements associated in the past with religious geniuses, liberated a power for

## *ETHICS AND POLITICS : THE MODERN CONCEPT.*

good which is ethical in character and which may yet leaven the world's thinking to some purpose.

If, nevertheless, ethics must still be regarded as being on the defensive in the contemporary world that can only be set down to the fact that it is none too sure of itself. If politics may be regarded as the art by which man organises himself in communities to pursue the good life, it can fulfil its function only if it continually keeps a blue-print before it of a commonly accepted conception of the good life, in other words, of a common ethic. In primitive societies, customary morality supplied this need. Each community had its own system of obligations and taboos; and men's faith in them was rarely disturbed, because they rarely happened upon a view of life basically different from their own. The gradual emancipation of the individual from the matrix of the society in which, like Michael Angelo's Adam, he is half-imbedded, and the changes introduced by technological advancement combined to disturb his old tribal convictions. But, as the hunger for certitude, for some guide to conduct is deeply implanted in the race, the cultural evolution of society has been in the main the result of man's painful attempts to establish equilibrium between his animal nature and his moral aspiration.

But it would be fanciful to see here as in other manifestations of the life-process an ascending spiral of progress. It may be more fitly likened, in some of the stages at least, to the kind of bargain that Moses let himself in for at the fair. Thus, in the morning time of the race, when politics had not thrown up even the City state, we had not only a fairly highly developed system of ethics but a metaphysic to support it—crude or even fanciful as this last was in many of its manifestations. But in post-Renaissance Europe the emergence of the secular State was made possible by political philosophy ostentatiously parting company with ethics. Religion, especially in its institutional forms, survived; but it became the fashion to speak of it more and more as the private concern of the individual. Thus the capitalist class that did well out of the Industrial Revolution regarded itself as profoundly religious; but that did not prevent it from grinding the face of the poor. The later Victorians lost their religion, thanks largely to Darwin; but they were profoundly concerned with ethical questions and in course of time came to persuade themselves that what mattered was not faith in things that could not be proved but a blameless life devoted to human uplift. But, for their successors the props were removed from under them by the anthropologists and psychologists who combined to show that all morals were relative. The wheel had come full circle. These people came to hold with Hegel that the rational is the real, that whatever is is right.

A way out of the impasse can only be found by courageously reasserting the existence of positive, fundamental values and positing the need for a metaphysic. It is an anthropologist, Dr. R. R. Marett, who is quoted by Aldous Huxley as saying, "Real progress is progress

## **TRIVENI**

in charity, all other advances being secondary thereto." And the practice of charity as well as courage, intelligence and the rest, must have for their firm foundation an active belief in a worthy goal. It was Robespierre who, as Shaw puts it, said that "after an honest attempt to dispense with a Supreme Being in practical politics some such hypothesis had been found quite indispensable and could not be replaced by a sham Goddess of Reason."\*

\* By courtesy of All India Radio, Madras.

# THE FIRST CASE

(A Story)

*By Munimanikyam Narasimha Rao*

*Rendered from Telugu By R. Ramakrishnayya, M.A.*

## I

THE agents' meeting came to a close and they were all dispersing with contentment in their looks. But Iswar Rao was an unhappy exception, for he received not even a pie as commission. He was leaving the hall with empty hands, and a dejected countenance. Would the goddess presiding over insurance ever smile upon him? Just as he stepped out of the hall, a servant of the company informed him that the General Manager was calling him. Iswar Rao dragged himself to the Manager's table, and sank wearily into a chair in front of him.

"Mr. Rao," said the Manager in a compassionate tone, "it is nearly a year since you took up the agency, but you have not been able to rope in one person yet. What is the matter?"

"I am straining every nerve, sir, but fortune does not favour me. I am unlucky," replied Iswar Rao pleadingly.

"Believe me, Mr. Rao, luck and ill-luck do not find a place in the dictionary of insurance. Hard work, young man, hard work is the key-word to success. You must intensify your efforts" said the Manager.

"Then, please, what shall I do?" asked Rao imploringly.

"Every minute, nay, every second, you must concentrate on insurance", the Manager said.

"I am reading lots of books on insurance, sir," replied Iswar Rao.

"My good God!" exclaimed the Manager. "Stop reading those infernal books for insurance' sake. Straightway begin the study of men, and understand their psychology. Your bookish knowledge will not stand you in good stead. You are a graduate, and I need not tell you much."

Iswar Rao nodded his distressed head in reply.

The Manager, with the air of a professor of practical insurance, continued to initiate the neophyte into the deeper mysteries of insurance. "Man, generally, is interested in the present, and is not prudent enough to lay by something against the rainy day. He is so self-centred that he cares a hang for the future as well as that of his dependants. Do you understand?"

"Yes, please" said the agent.

"Remember, it is the sacred mission of the insurance agent in this world", said the Manager, glad that his pupil had at last comprehended the trade-secret.



## TRIVENI

Iswar Rao seemed to be a young man of promise. The Manager was bent upon giving all possible encouragement to him: he ought to stick to the business and prosper.

So he proceeded, "Mr. Rao, you must not despair. Work with a will and your efforts will be crowned with success sooner or later. From sunrise to sunset you must be thinking about insurance. Suppose you are travelling in a train. You have much time on hand. You can talk alluringly about the thousand and one benefits of insurance (to your fellow-passengers) and of the innumerable sufferings of the wives and children of those who died without insuring their lives. Your words will find fertile soil in the minds of at least a few persons and bear fruit. The secret of it all is persistence."

The Manager did not like to send away Iswar Rao with empty hands. He sympathized with his lot and gave him an advance of fifty rupees and his blessing into the bargain.

Iswar Rao felt pleased with the monetary encouragement. He felt that his erstwhile failures were only stepping stones to success and that self-confidence was returning. When others succeeded why shouldn't he? He vowed that until he made at least one person insure his life he would not touch food. He must succeed this time at any cost. At Bezwada to begin with, he could fish one or two men who were badly in need of the protective care of insurance. Grim determination was depicted in every feature of his countenance.

## II

The agent strode to the railway station, booked his ticket, and seated himself in a compartment which was almost empty. The Manager's words were ringing in his ears. He should not let slip even a moment, and could start hunting even in a railway carriage.

Right opposite to him was seated a young man of about twenty. He had a woe-begone countenance, and was looking vacantly at others. From his dress and manner he seemed to be a petty clerk in some office. His forlorn appearance inspired Iswar Rao with new courage, and he determined to lose no time in casting his net, for something in him told him that the youth was in dire need of an insurance policy.

The idea was splendid, but this was his first case. The first blow was half the battle. He must succeed in his first attempt. He had a natural turn for business, and it was this consideration that weighed with him in the choice of his profession.

Scarcely had he noticed this youth when his latent abilities cried for expression. In the line of insurance it was only the first case that was difficult. If the first hurdle was crossed the rest was an easy walk-over.

## III

Iswar Rao immediately rose from his seat, and sat beside the young man. He broke the ice of conversation, and by clever questioning elicited all information about his position in life; this initial success

## THE FIRST CASE

ought to bring credit even to a veteran insurance agent. The young man was a poor elementary school teacher, drudging through life. His family was small, and for the present he was able to manage anyhow. But he would be at sea (according to the calculation of the agent) in a few years, for with the passage of time his family was bound to increase.

As long as there was the vital breath in his body, he might be able to support his family, but if by an insidious stroke of blind fate he were to die, who would look after his unfortunate wife and the little ones? This line of argument seemed to be the most potent; it would bend the will of even those who were so obstinately self-controlled as to resist the humanitarian appeals of life insurance.

But the teacher did not show any signs of intelligence in his countenance. He seemed to be suffering from a deep melancholy. He answered his questions with uninterested absent-mindedness and vague looks. Perhaps the horrid picture of his wife and children begging from door to door induced this fit of mental depression on him. It was his sacred duty, as a humble servant of life insurance, to lift people like this young man from the slough of despondency. By drying the tears of this young man and bringing joy into his home, he would not only serve the interests of his company, but also add to his merit in this life.

With terrible determination the agent started his humanitarian mission, and dragged the young man into conversation. He drove home the cruel truth—the transitoriness of the flimsy bubble called human life which might burst any moment without notice.

“Please, ponder over this well,” Iswar Rao spoke with all the eloquence at this command, “all men are mortal. Now we are joyfully conversing; but we cannot be sure of the next moment.”

Iswar Rao’s eloquence seemed to have been lost upon the listener. There was no visible change of expression on his face, and he sat up as if he turned a deaf ear to the agent’s words. He neither endorsed his view nor combated it.

“Look here, mister,” Iswar Rao continued with redoubled fervour, “this train is now rushing on the bridge. It is not impossible that the bridge might collapse, and the poor passengers buried fathoms deep in the bed of the river. Such an unforeseen calamity has happened times out of number. What do you say?”

The teacher who had been listening to his words with diverted looks, turned towards the agent, and seemed to show some eagerness to understand the mysteries of the philosophy of life as expounded by the agent. Encouraged by this responsive gesture of the teacher, the agent added, “Death is always near. It dogs men at every step and assumes a thousand unrecognisable shapes. Once a bullock-cart overturned, and killed an innocent fellow who was passing along.”

The teacher was all astonishment when he heard about the monstrosity of Death, and turned pale. The agent’s harangue seemed

to have produced the desired effect. He was already halfway on the road leading to success. The teacher would surely be lured into his net. His face was the index of his success. Without slackening in his efforts he continued his sermon on the uncertainty of human life, carefully watching the changes of expression on the face of his listener.

Then the agent said, "There are people who fell down while cycling and lost their lives on the spot."

Then the teacher, to the utter satisfaction of the agent, pulled a wry face. His speech had overwhelmed him. The agent came out successful in the preliminary part of his canvassing which was the most trying and delicate kind of work, and it only remained now to impress upon him the necessity of buying a policy to safeguard the future of his 'better-half' and children. As his prey was almost in his grip, he did not want to waste any more time on philosophy, but thought of applying the naked grim truth of his doctrine directly and finish him. With an air of assumed solemnity he pleaded, "Dear teacher, pay heed to my words. Please, don't take them amiss. You have no property to fall back upon in times of need. You are leading a precarious existence in a remote village on a mere pittance, and you have no other source of income. Imagine for a moment in what a miserable plight your wife and children will be in the event of death getting the better of you and felling you with a cruel stroke. Ponder over this well. They, poor victims of hunger and want, will be compelled to lead a dog's life." Iswar Rao paused awhile darting stern looks at the poor teacher. The melodramatic effect of his words sent a thrill along his own spinal cord. Even he shuddered to think of the fate of his own wife. With a feeling of triumph surging in his breast he scrutinised the teacher's face.

The teacher nodded assent to the words of the agent and seemed ready to confess to a sense of guilt on his part for the utter ruin he was bringing upon his family by mere lack of imagination. Even while nodding his head sheepishly, he lost control over his feelings, so long pent-up, and to the utter confusion of the agent, he burst out sobbing. Tears sprang to his eyes, and rolled down his cheeks pursuing one another in a stream.

The effect was as unexpected as it was shocking to the agent. He felt that he had overshot the mark. Never for a moment did he think that a teacher could be so crack-brained as to be upset by a well-known truth of life. Even before he expounded his theme, the teacher was behaving like a mere child. What he wanted merely was to get him to agree to buy a policy for a paltry sum of Rs. 5000, and the premium of Rs. 2 per month would after all fall very gently on him. What had he done to send him into fits of uncontrollable sobbing?

This heart-rending scene attracted the attention of their fellow-passengers. They suddenly stopped their group conversations, and all

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turned their faces towards the teacher in distress, with looks of surprised interrogation.

An elderly gentleman felt it his duty as a fellow-passenger to intervene and stop this bullying. "Why do you ill-treat him like that? What is the matter?" asked he of the agent with a consequential air. What could poor Iswar Rao reply? He turned pale in his turn, and hung his head in shame. He felt that he was in an intriguing situation. He himself felt like weeping. Both of them sat tongue-tied. Not only they but also the rest of the passengers sat motionless in stupefied amazement.

The hang-dog face and bewildered looks of the agent made all the people think that he was behind the whole mischief. The thought that the consensus of opinion held him responsible for the misery of the young man, made him look upon himself with contempt.

After a few minutes the teacher recovered from his sobbing. An old woman sitting near him took this opportunity to console him and enquire into the cause of his trouble. With motherly tenderness she said, "My dear son, you seem to be quite innocent; my heart is cut in twain as I see your misery. Why do you weep? What is the matter?" She paused and wiped a tear or two from her eyes with the end of her sari.

The young man could find no words to reply. Tears welled up in his eyes. With great effort he uttered feebly, "My wife will die", and he could not continue. Flinging his arms round her neck with boyish indecorum and resting his head on her shoulders he burst into sobs again.

The old woman too could not control her sorrow. Gathering the sorrowful figure of her new-found grandson in her arms with extreme tenderness and passing the fingers of her right hand gently over his cropped hair, she said in a soothing voice, "My son, my darling, no fear for your wife. By God's grace she will be well. Is she dangerously ill?" With these words she burst into sympathetic sobs. When she spoke so as to console him, he stopped weeping. But suddenly he would remember something and weep again. Seeing her grandson weep, the grandma wept. This went on for sometime.

Iswar Rao's heart went pit-a-pat. The world began to swim, and fantastic shapes danced before his blurred eyes. The whole world seemed to have hatched a nasty plot to bring him and insurance into discredit, or he might have been in the grip of a magic spell. He was in a condition in which his senses seemed to fail in their functions.

### IV

As a matter of fact, nobody in the compartment knew the real cause of the teacher's sorrow. Those who occupied the first bench thought that his wife might be seriously ill and those on the third bench believed that she was already dead.

Some others were enraged at the tactless behaviour of Iswar Rao. He could as well have broken the sad news after he had got down from the train.

Iswar Rao composed himself somewhat, and made an honest attempt to guess what might be the cause of his trouble. Perhaps, his wife might have been suffering from an illness of a serious nature. He thought this the clue to his absentmindedness and mental depression. His own poignant words that the teacher's wife and children might die of starvation must have hurt him. He was so weak-minded that he could not even bear the suggestion of a calamity. He came to this conclusion, using his knowledge of psychology.

By this time the teacher seemed to have regained composure; but the shadow of depression still hung over his face. Slightly encouraged by this change in his looks the old lady addressed him, "Be a man, my dear son, what is the use of weeping?" But he looked as vacantly as ever.

Somebody on the last bench stood up, and with a firmness of voice which seemed to have been born of intimate knowledge, declared to the puzzled people that they were only brothers-in-law. Nobody doubted the truth of this statement. How he could divine this was a wonder to all!

The old lady, eager to ascertain the truth, asked the teacher, "Dear son, whose sister is given to whom?"

Iswar Rao was non-plussed. The passengers were trying to establish a relationship between himself and the teacher. A brainless, spineless fellow to be the husband of his own sister—the very thought was loathsome. How rascally those passengers were! Iswar Rao who had lost all initiative by this time kept mum. The youth nodded his head to the old woman's question, "Is his sister your wife?" Now it was beyond a shadow of doubt that they were brothers-in-law. The mystery was cleared.

A knowledge of this relationship brought instant relief to all except Iswar Rao who never imagined that insurance agents could be forced into such strange relationships with their clients.

## V

The agent sat lost in thought. The inquisitiveness of the old lady was not satisfied. She inquired of the teacher if he had any children. At this question he raised a finger of his hand. "So you have one child to look after even at such a tender age," said she weeping and stroking his head. Whether he meant that he was alone without either a wife or children nobody knew. But who would care to understand him properly? The old lady who was the only person that took interest in his affairs and made an honest attempt to interpret his words and gestures, at once jumped to the conclusion that he had a child. When she raised the point of bringing up the child, he began to cry more loudly than ever.

Then the grandmother consoled her grandson saying, "Please, stop for the child's sake at least. Be a man, be a man, my dear son."

"Even that only child won't survive," he cried. This time he entwined his hands round the neck of the agent, and using his chest as a support for his head began to weep again.

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Iswar Rao could not think of a way by which he would be able to get rid of the nuisance of a supposed brother-in-law who was hanging round his neck like a mill-stone. Though the action of the teacher was quite unendurable to Iswar Rao, no other passenger was struck with the unseemliness of his behaviour. When a person was overwhelmed with sorrow, there was nothing strange in his embracing his brother-in-law and weeping. Iswar Rao felt afraid that they would consider him as a stone-hearted cynic. He was prepared to go to the extent of owning the unknown teacher as his sister's husband for the time being, but it did not strike his dazed mind that by the intrigue of circumstances he would be compelled to weep in unison with the teacher. Had he known that insurance business would thrust him into such preposterous situations, he would have safely avoided it, and chosen another line. There were a thousand other ways of earning one's living in the broad world.

He could not help weeping lest he should be put down as an inhuman wretch. In response to the teacher's sobbing, the agent took him in his arms and wept with all his heart.

Now the burden upon the shoulders of the people in the carriage to bring solace to the two broken hearts became twice heavier than before. So in one voice they tried to pacify the weeping pair saying, "Dear ones! What is past is past. There is no use crying over spilt milk. You must put an end to your weeping, otherwise it will tell upon your health."

The old woman who had hitherto showed some partiality to the teacher, now bestowed her sympathetic attentions on the agent also. She took his confounded head into her hands and said, "Mad chap, if you also lose heart, who would console your brother-in-law? His only child is ill. Perhaps this is the first blow in his life. O, how inevitable is fate! You must pick up courage, and put heart into him."

Her words had the desired effect on the agent, but the teacher went on weeping intermittently. The agent did not know how to extricate himself from this wretched situation. He thought of throwing himself overboard, and running away. He might sustain great injuries. While attempting to do so, they might all drag him back and chide him for leaving his brother-in-law to his fate in the hour of his difficulty. It was indiscreet to swim against the current of public opinion. Though the passengers in the carriage were but a microscopic minority of the people in the world, they were the world before which Iswar Rao was forced to acquit himself. So he determined not to migrate to another carriage.

The train was passing station after station, while the two youths went on weeping. Their faces became reddish brown and swollen.

The train stopped at a station. It was just next to Bezwada. Immediately after the train had stopped an elderly person came running to the window by which the teacher was sitting, and peeping through it shouted, "Here he is, run up." Instantly another old gentleman came up to the carriage, gasping. Both of them got in and sat beside the teacher. One of them said with disgust, "You silly ass! We have been

searching and searching for you, getting down at each and every station." The other asked him, "You muff, when did you get into this compartment? What made you leave us so abruptly?"

This double volley of questions set him a-weeping again. The old lady asked the older of the two, if the teacher was related to them. He replied that he was his son. The other old gentleman was the teacher's uncle.

Feeling great relief as if a heavy burden had been removed from her shoulders she said reprovingly, "Brothers, for a long time he has been sobbing hysterically in spite of my attempts to console him. Why have you left the poor boy alone?"

The old gentleman asked him in a gruff voice, "You vagabond, why do you weep?"

The teacher remained silent. Pitying his condition she said, "Don't be cross with him, please. After all he is still young. His heart has not yet been sufficiently hardened by misfortune. Anybody would have done the same under the same circumstances. It is but human to weep over the loss of his wife and daughter.

The old gentleman felt bewildered. With puzzled looks he said, "He has no daughter. Who told you he has one?"

"Is it so? He has no daughter. Then he must have been weeping for the death of his wife."

"Shut up," roared his maternal uncle. It is a shame that even a person of your age should be indulging in such inauspicious words. He is not yet married and how could he have a daughter? You have not been able to mend your evil nature even at this advanced age! It is too late to begin now."

She felt that she did not deserve these reproaches from the churlish maternal uncle of the youth. Was this the reward of all her kindness and sympathy bestowed on him?

The old gentleman's words were a puzzle to all.

Everybody felt that the carriage must have been bewitched. Everybody felt that it was Iswar Rao's duty to give a convincing solution to the riddle. All eyes were turned towards him for a clue.

Iswar Rao was in a dilemma. He had never been in such a predicament as this. He felt that the floor of the carriage was sinking under his feet. How did the teacher happen to be his sister's husband? Why did he also weep? These two questions stared at him.

If he told them the truth he would become the laughing stock of the whole world; his name would be printed in bold headlines in the newspapers and some malicious author would take his experiences into account and exaggerating them weave them into a fictitious tale. His name would lie in the mouth of all. He would be held up as a warning to all insurance agents in future. This would spread like wild fire and might finally reflect on the company he represented. There would be much ado about nothing.

His only thought was how to get out of the awkward situation without any blot on his honour. There seemed to be no way out. In a

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moment all the people would besiege him and subject him to cross-examination.

When he was engrossed in thought the grand old lady asked the father of the teacher, "Please, sir, when he has neither wife nor daughter why did he weep so bitterly over their loss?"

The old gentleman replied as if he was quite put out and disgusted with his son. He said, "Madam, no one need bother about his weeping. It is his fate." This reply did not go a long way in solving the puzzle. Then his uncle commented on the trite explanation of his father. He said, "Poor fellow! For the last one month he has been suffering from a peculiar mental aberration. His mind has been slightly touched. He sits sullen and morose for hours together without talking to anybody. At the slightest suggestion of any unpleasant thing or sometimes without any apparent reason he bursts into hysterical sobs. This is his trouble. We are taking him to the mental hospital at Vizag for treatment.

Stung to the quick, perhaps, by the uncharitable and uncomplimentary words of his uncle (which in his view were a gross misrepresentation of facts) the teacher who had been strangely silent all the while blurted out at least, "What a mad world is this! None but the mad think I'm mad. This astrologer, even at the first examination of my physiognomy, said that soon after my marriage my wife would die and even if I were to beget a child it would also follow her. Now would my uncle give his daughter in marriage to me?"

All the passengers who listened to the teacher with rapt attention were filled with contempt for Iswar Rao. "Father, he did not stop there with his predictions. He told me that I would also die in a train disaster. Even if I were to survive it I would surely be run over by a car or at least a bullock-cart," added the teacher, weeping again.

Iswar Rao went mad temporarily. This whole world with all its people seemed to whirl round him like a merry-go-round. "Surely this is a mad world I am living in. Pure truth is unendurable and horrible. People go mad even at the first sight of it," he thought with infinite self-pity.

Then the old woman took him by the hand and said, "You knave! What devil made you utter such atrocious predictions to the youth?"

"You wept over the loss of your sister? What about that?" asked another gentleman looking at Iswar Rao.

All the people were looking daggers at Iswar Rao. He felt that his body was being cut into pieces. The situation was extremely intolerable.

The train had arrived at Bezwada. Even before the train had stopped, Iswar Rao abruptly opened the door of the carriage, landed on the platform and drowned himself in the sea of people.

The old woman and the rest of the people, after an exchange of thoughts, came to the unanimous conclusion that Iswar Rao also was mad.



## SISTER NIVEDITA

*By Najoo Bilimoria*

ONE of the finest and rarest gifts that England ever bestowed on India was the fragile and beautiful personality of Margaret Elizabeth Noble, affectionately remembered in India as Sister Nivedita. She was the precursor of others like Annie Besant and Miraben, women of exceptional stature and outstanding character, who although just a few drops in the mighty ocean of ignoramuses and narrow biased 'memasahibs' that 'came out' to India, have left deeper footprints on the Indian's memory page.

Margaret Noble was born on the 28th October, 1867 of Irish parentage. She inherited her powers of eloquence—her voice like a 'trumpet with a silver sound'—from her father, who was a very fine preacher. To him religion meant service and this lesson also he taught his daughter. The Nobles were well acquainted with India and the Indian way of life and anyone from India was a welcome guest in their household. Mr. Noble had always had an inner feeling that his daughter was born to do something great one day. The parents had resolved that they would not stand in her way if she made up her mind to do anything—however unconventional a calling it may be.

Miss Noble was extremely intelligent and even Thomas Huxley was struck by the brilliance of her mind; she was well-read in all the thinkers of the day. Hers was not a sharp, analytic intelligence which is only at home in the realm of the theoretical; she combined theory and practice: she was a 'practical idealist', to quote a phrase of Mahatma Gandhi's. She was deeply religious, but religion to her meant no particular creed or dogma, but simple selfless service of 'the poor, the lowly and the lost'. She opened a school for those who did not have means to afford a good education, in London; especially did she encourage women to come to her school. Her ideas of education were also not conventional; to her the main aim of education was to train up people who would be the servants of the society they lived in.

It was at this time that she came in contact with Swami Vivekananda, who, after his triumphal tour of the United States, was giving a few lectures on Hinduism and Vedantism in London. Miss Noble attended these lectures regularly and although at first, she was not impressed, gradually she was drawn to the personality of the Swami, whose deep spiritual powers and desire for selfless service were so outstanding. The Swami, in turn, at once recognised that here he had found not only a 'disciple' but also a colleague. No one would be better able to put into practice his various ideals for the amelioration of Indian womanhood than Miss Noble. Accordingly he invited her to India and she accepted. He wrote to her at this time: "I will stand by you unto death, whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta or remain in it. The tusks of the elephant come out, but they never go back. Even so are the words of a man".

Miss Noble came to India in 1898 and stayed at Belur—the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission near Calcutta. Here she tried to

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accustom herself to the austere mode of life lived at the Ashram. She also travelled a great deal all over the country with Swami Vivekananda and many of her observations are recorded in her books, especially in the *Footfalls of Indian History*. Here is what she says of Banaras: "Benares is an epitome of the whole Indian synthesis of nationality. As the new-comer is rowed down the river past the long lines of temples and bathing ghats, while the history of each is told to him in turn, he feels, catching his breath at each fresh revelation of builded beauty that all roads in India always must have led to Benares. In the caves of Elephanta she found 'the synthesis of Hinduism'; where as in the paintings of Ajanta, she saw a 'nobility and pity that stand alone in human history'. She was thrilled by the quiet beauty of the ancient cities of Buddhism and by the unsophisticated grace of Rajgirh—'an ancient Babylon'. She also visited Punjab and Kashmir right up to Amarnath. Travel, to Sister Nivedita, was not 'sight seeing' but a study of the history and people of a place—an experience in living. "I have had spiritual experiences that can never be forgotten. I have sometimes listened towards that I will always remember. I have at least once seen the supreme beauty of God".

Miss Noble soon accepted Hinduism and then joined the Order of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa; she changed her name to Nivedita—one who is dedicated to the service of God.

During the bubonic plague that raged in Calcutta, Sister Nivedita organised a band of volunteers and rendered yeoman service in relief work. At this time, Swami Vivekananda, who was ailing, was advised a sea voyage, and both he and Sister Nivedita set out for England. It was on this voyage that Sister Nivedita started a close and accurate study of the Swami's works, which she expounded so nobly to the world thereafter in *The Master as I Saw Him*.

From England, Sister Nivedita went on a lecture tour of the United States, where she spoke to large audiences on the spirit of India as embodied in her women. On her return to London, Sister Nivedita collected money for the school that she wanted to start for Indian women. Soon after her return, the Swami died and although Sister Nivedita was grief-stricken, it only strengthened her resolve to follow in her Master's footsteps and carry on his mission.

She rented a house in the most orthodox quarter of Calcutta and completely identifying herself with the people among whom she lived, she became one of them. Not only did she teach the women who came to her school to read and write, but also the elementary rules of hygiene and how to nurse the sick and suffering. She gave shelter to widows and orphans in her home and her house began to be known as the House of the Sisters.

Side by side with her teaching, she gave public lectures and wrote books on Indian subjects, which showed a keen and penetrating insight into Indian life. Although she had imbibed Indian ways and modes of life, she was objective enough in her estimate of things Indian. She neither condemned nor praised uncritically, but always went to the root

of the matter and saw the good and evil equally well. She loved and appreciated the beauty in Indian life, art and literature and expounded it to the world in some of her books especially in *The Web of Indian Life* which is almost the only book in England which presents such a correct and at the same time philosophical interpretation of Indian life. In tender and beautiful words she describes the Indian Mother: "For what thought is it that speaks supremely to India in the great word 'Mother'? Is it not the vision of a love that never seeks to possess, that is, content simply to be—a giving that could not wish return: a radiance that we do not even dream of grasping, but in which we are content to bask, letting the eternal sunshine play around and through us?"

Sister Nivedita understood and loved India more than many Indians of her generation or even of today. She preached the love of India with as much fervour as some people preach a particular religion. Although she lived in Bengal, she had a clear vision of the synthetic unity that is India. Again in *The Web of Indian Life* she says: "Another feature of the Indian synthesis is its completely organic character in a territorial sense. Every province within the vast boundaries fulfils some necessary part in the completing of a nationality. No one place repeats the specialised function of another. And what is true of the districts holds equally good of the people as a whole, and the women in particular. In a national character we always find a summary of the national history. Of no country is this more true than of India."

During the terrible famine that overtook Bengal in 1906, Sister Nivedita, at the cost of her own health, went visiting the distressed villages of Barisal on foot, sometimes wading for miles through swamps and malarial water. She was attacked by malarial fever, but in spite of it she worked and toiled unceasingly till she breathed her last in Darjeeling on the 13th of October, 1911.

Sister Nivedita's was a three-fold task of service: not only did she interpret India's culture and heritage to the Western world, but she also gave the best that is in Western life and thought to India. And above all, she made Indians—ignorant of their own great heritage and seeking their salvation in the superficialities of the West—aware and conscious of themselves. Perhaps this last was her greatest service—of helping the lost soul of India to find and reassert itself.

A distinguished son of India—Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy—has paid her the following tribute: "Sister Nivedita brought to the study of Indian life and literature a sound knowledge of Western educational and social science, and an unsurpassed enthusiasm of devotion to the peoples and ideals of her adopted country . . . Sister Nivedita was not merely an interpreter of India to Europe, but even more, the inspiration of a new race of Indian students, no longer anxious to be Anglicized, but convinced that all real progress, as distinct from mere political controversy, must be based on national ideals, upon intentions already clearly expressed in religion and art."

## FALSTAFF AND THE SONNETS

*By K. Visvanatham, M.A.*

O, I should have a heavy miss of thee  
If I were much in love with vanity.

THE myth of Shakespeare's impersonality is vanishing like a ghost at cock's crow in the light of researches of scholars like G. B. Harrison. The objectivity of Shakespeare has been monstrously over-philosophised. Poets, as Bagehot remarks, do not keep tame engines to write their poems. Even poems which are cast in the mould of a convention indicate the hobnobbing of the power of the moment and the power of the man. Interior impulse and external fashion kiss each other into the red blossom of art. It is not enough to remark that Shakespeare could dramatize his experiences more effectively than others. When we speak of the experience of poets we commit the mistake of drawing a circumference of experience beyond the reach of the ordinary man. An unkind word by a neighbour may make a sensitive man cynical and a wife's taunt may dynamite the peace of a man's life and rouse all the sexual disgust there is in Hamlet. To draw Macbeth it is not necessary to invent for the poet some macabre experience. We are all murderers: easy victims of temptation. In so far as life is climbing, one treads on the corns or on the head of somebody else. Round the nucleus of ordinary experience gathers a vast life of passions and prejudices which rocks and heaves at the impact of an appropriate stimulus. Without this no poem is written and even if written, it is a case of verbal agility.

For a proper appreciation of the Falstaff plays we have to go to the experience in the Sonnets. The Sonnets reveal the poet's deep attachment to the Fair Youth of a higher status. The friendship is the target of unsavoury comments. There is the rift aggravated by the Dark Mistress and an uneasy reconciliation takes place because of the initiative of the poet. This essay attempts to prove that this experience has gone into the Falstaff plays. Falstaff is the older man misguiding the Prince as the world believed. The king sees riot and dishonour stain the brow of his son. The Prince only relaxes himself in the company of sweet Jack Falstaff and, as easily as he would shed soiled garments assumed for a purpose, drops his boozing companion. The young man and the poet of the Sonnets are the Prince and Falstaff of the plays. It is the friendship between a man of high status and one who wishes to make his fortune in London under the patronage of his friend. The poet has no claim over the young man as Falstaff has no claims over the Prince. The rejection of Falstaff pains us precisely because Falstaff makes the reader believe that he has claims on the

friendship of the Prince. It is entirely out of his grace or breeziness that the Prince hovers round Falstaff. He is 'in it but not of it.' Hence the poet in Sonnet, 58:

That god forbid that made me first your slave,  
I should in thought control your times of pleasure, etc.

From the start we find in the plays tremors in the thick rotundity of Falstaff. He requests the Prince that when he became king, the 'gang' of Falstaff should be 'gentlemen of the shade'. That the company of the poet has goaded the blatant beast against himself and the young man is evident from the Sonnets. So the poet bitterly or resignedly asks the young man not to mourn for him lest his friends taunt him for his irrational love towards the poet:

Lest the world should look into your moan  
And mock you with me after I am gone (Sonnet, 71)

What the poet with a mournful awareness of the future says in Sonnet, 49:

Against that time, if ever that time come,  
When I shall see thee frown on my defects, etc.,

explains the anxiety of Falstaff: "Do not thou, when thou art king, hand a thief." The apparently curt and wounding reproof of Henry V: "I know thee not, old man" will not rouse our hostility to the king if the 'death wish' (to term it so) in Sonnet, 36 is understood.

Nor thou with public kindness honour me,  
Unless thou take that honour from thy name.

If this personal experience is properly juxtaposed, the rejection of Falstaff does not leave a bad taste and a right understanding of the Prince's character is possible. This emotional context is finely described by J. A. Fort. (*A Time Scheme for Shakespeare's Sonnets*, p. 51): "It is only the story of an older man of inferior rank, who already foresaw (No. xlix) that his influence over a younger man of higher rank must some day cease, trying to retain his influence as long as possible, and to do so Shakespeare had always to send letters of compliment or affection immediately after his letters of reproof, but the poet handled his difficult pupil with exquisite skill and this old story of a very strange friendship is, I think, a fascinating one apart from the lovely poetry in which it is told." Shakespeare is irritated by the Rival Poet and the infection and impiety that surround his friend (Sonnet, 67). This jealousy is easily paralleled in Falstaff's letter: "Be not too familiar with Poins; for he misuses thy favours so much that he swears thou art to marry his sister Nell." The mistress of the Sonnets is perhaps Doll Tearsheet of Falstaff. One might go to the extent of positing that every scene of Falstaff and the Prince can be fitted into the Sonnets decorously even to the way of address like 'my sweet boy'.

Before we brand the Prince a prig, let us understand him. Whenever we judge a character we take into consideration what he says

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about himself and what others say about him. The Prince refuses to be a satellite of Falstaff because Falstaff is a 'rogue', a globe of sinful continents, and villainous company. The story of Willobie His Avis is a description of this experience. Like the Prince the young man of the Sonnets refuses to be tied to the apron-strings of Shakespeare: like the poet of the sonnets Falstaff pleads every time he meets the prince that he should not reject him. When he plays the king, he says, "There is virtue in that Falstaff: him keep with, the rest banish." (And from his description of the Prince having a foolish hanging of the nether lip it is possible perhaps to indentify the Fair Youth of the Sonnets). Falstaff blames the Prince in his absence but glozes over it in his presence. "I dispraised him before the wicked, that the wicked might not fall in love with him," says Falstaff when he was surprised by the Prince.

Apart from this personal experience there is artistic propriety behind the rejection. Falstaff pretends extra-breeziness masking his flesh-quakes to win the love of the Prince. The fears of the old man are expressed so often that the actual rejection should not be a surprise just as murder in a novel of Dostoevsky does not surprise us because it has been so frequently mentioned from the start. In his own field—the kingdom of humour—Falstaff 'stays put'; his improvement is 'from prayer to purse-taking'. Satire, according to Ronald Knox, is Humour capped with criticism; Humour is sheer breeziness and without Satire is a waste product. Raleigh's definition of Humour better fits Satire; it is "thinking in fun while feeling in earnest." Falstaff does not evolve from Humour to Satire. The artillery of Falstaff's good humour detonates constantly—but with the purpose of 'whitemailing' the Prince. "A god wit," he says, "will make use of anything. I will turn diseases into commodity." How is it that we read the soliloquy of the Prince and condemn him as a hypocrite and do not think of censuring the fat knight when he soliloquizes, "If the young dace be a bait for the old pike, I see no reason in the law of nature, but I may snap at him?" The Chief Justice, for instance, is Falstaff-prof. "Sir John, Sir John, I am well acquainted with your manner of wrenching the true cause the false way. It is not a confident brow, nor the throng of words that come with such more than impudent sauciness from you can thrust me from a level consideration . . ."

If Falstaff is the spirit of freedom from all obligations, he would have been free from the obligation of death (if that expression is allowable). He would have slipped like an eel from the disaster of rejection. Falstaff smells of the meat and drink of jokes. But we tire of jokes. The paradoxes of Wilde exhilarate us for some time and then leave us heart-whole. There is always the appalling risk of Shavian coruscations becoming Shavian monkeyings (an impossible adjective as Shaw himself noted). Shaw may say the real joke is I-am-in-earnest but the reader thinks earnestly that he is a joke. Shaw could not clap the lid on his irrepressible comicality even at the time of his mother's funeral that Granville Barker remarked, "You certainly are a merry

soul, Shaw." Tolstoy could not stomach the inappropriate brilliance of *Man and Superman*. The severe rebuke administered by the Prince to Falstaff: "Peace, chewet, peace" or "Reply not to me with a fool-born jest"—indicates that he could not have made him his lifelong companion. The famous catechism on Honour is not so much criticism as irresponsibility that flies at everything like a haggard without jesses. There is no propriety in his jokes. "What, is it a time to jest and dally now?" The tragedy of Shaw lies, writes Ronald Knox, in the shouts of laughter that greeted his remark that a woman risks her life every time she brings a child into the world in a greater measure than a soldier on the battle-field.

Falstaff silences our criticism by his brilliant retorts. That is why Poins warns the Prince: "My Lord, he will drive you out of your revenge, and turn all to a merriment, if you take not the heat." The fat knight flings an enormous cloak of self-pity about him. Falstaff refuses to be cornered because there are no corners about him; he not only lards the lean earth with wit but slithers down his way greased with self-pity though he mints laughter out of self-pity too. If Falstaff makes fun of his girth, his sack, his lechery, his lying, his fleecing others, it is not because of a Shakespearian hatred of pedantry and love of the unending diversity of God's creation. It is only to amuse the Prince, to cash his cheques on the goodwill of his friend and give his lechery an unending lease. We love Falstaff because we do not love to be frowned upon by moralists. He is like the clown who shakes his ears or stands on his head, amuses the audience and gathers his pennies; his clowning now runs with the hares, now hunts with the hounds. Self-pity seems to be the characteristic of some of the tragic heroes of Shakespeare. In many of his plays there is the case of "Virtue rudely trumpeted." That is why in fierce derision of the moral pedantry, "of the frailer spies on his sportive blood" the poet shouts at the pitch of his voice, "I am that I am" (Sonnet, 121) which is easily neighboured by Falstaff's passion against villainous company. Uneasy is the reconciliation we find in the sonnets. The poet forgives the lapse of his friend but it is forgiveness issuing out of helplessness. One is forced to think that by way of rectifying this he drew Prospero forgiving, when he could crush, his enemies like nuts between a door and the door-post.

It is common to talk of Falstaff as not only witty in himself but the cause that wit is in others. But the statement has to be revised. Though the Prince is not a match for Falstaff, he makes possible the inimitable Falstaff just as in the Sonnets the young man is no match for the poet but he is the substance of the poet's songs. "But thou art all my art" (Sonnet, 78). The Prince is the whetstone at least for Falstaff to hone his mind and raise sparks. Falstaff knows the Prince and fears him: the poet admires the Fair Youth and weeps

to have that which it fears to lose.

Sonnet, 94 which speaks of those who  
rightly do inherit heaven's graces

## FALSTAFF AND THE SONNETS

is a character-sketch of Henry V and is a commentary on his soliloquy which is unjustly regarded as dissimulation. Every man would think me an hypocrite indeed" is his fine awareness. The moment Shakespeare loses hold of the young man he does not touch earth and grows weak like Antaeus. The moment the Prince disowns the old lecher, his heart is "fracted and corroborate."

He cherished an illusion and when the scales drop from his eyes he collapses like a 'burst fink', though the Prince promises him competence for life; but competence would have satisfied a beggar, not this Leviathan that would lie floating many a rood in royal bounty.

The poet is greater, of course, than his creation. He survives these blenches and creates Lear's Fool who is an improvement on Falstaff in that his is purposeful laughter, laughter capped by criticism and understanding, not scattered by libertinism and irresponsibility, "now a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher's heart" outdistances. "There's that will sack a city" as much as knowledge outdistances ignorance. The poet creates Prospero and encourages us that "the best part of revenge is to be different from our enemy." Even Prospero forgives perhaps because the plot got out of the magician's wand when

At first sight  
They have changed eyes.



# THE SECULAR STATE AND MATHAS AND TEMPLES

By T. G. Aravamuthan, M.A., B.L.

## 1. *The Negation of the Principle of the Secular State*

THE establishment of a secular state in this country is the purpose to which we are all directing our efforts. It is the vision which has led us on these fifty years at least and it is what was striven for by Gandhiji, one of the greatest men of religion of all time, and it is what he died for. But in this corner of the country the principle is being negated by those who claim to be Gandhiji's disciples.

The Government of the Madras Province is engaged in pushing through the legislature an enactment enabling the state to take over the administration of Hindu Temples and Mathas and the endowments attached to them. The incongruity,—the irony,—of the secular state guaranteeing private property and securing it against public control and yet controlling the properties of religious institutions which, so far as the secular state is concerned, are private,—pertaining as they do, not to the generality of the citizens of the state, but to different religious groups of its citizens,—is evidently lost on the Government. For any but a theocratic state to administer religious institutions is an endeavour that is not only opposed to principle but is also fraught with grave mischief to both people and state. This is all the more so when the control is sought to be confined to the institutions of only one of the religions of the land,—the Hindu. The danger of the state becoming Hinduised through the inevitable intimacy of the new relationship between the state and Hindu institutions is one that cannot but raise anxious forebodings in the minds of Muslims and Christians. Nor can the converse probability of the other religious groups in the state,—the Muslim and the Christian,—and of the non-religious elements in the state, and even its irreligious elements, seeking to gain control over Hindu institutions and endowments infuse confidence in Hindus in the successful functioning of the secular state. The state cannot remain secular for long if it seeks to embroil itself in the affairs of the religion of even a small minority of its citizens. It dooms itself irretrievably when it plunges in the abysses of the religious affairs of the most populous group of its citizens. In the end, both state and religion will be lost: the state becomes infested with religion while religion becomes secularised.

That the administration of Hindu religious institutions and their foundations is sadly in need of complete overhaul is not in dispute. Indeed, the situation is worse than is even suspected. The maladministration has grown in dimensions and in degree, especially in recent years. Not only are the endowments to temples now in the unrestrained control of persons whose outlook is purely secular,—even antipathetic to the spirit of the institutions which the endowments were intended to support,—but they are also administered with little regard to economy.

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The endowments to Mathas are in most cases applied to purposes which would have shocked the pious founders. If the magnitude of the mismanagement of the temples is only sensed vaguely by the public and if none of it is known to the public in detail it is because nothing about any of them is, under the aegis of the Hindu Religious Endowments Board, now controlling these institutions, allowed to be published and because all avenues to information are closed. The Soviet 'iron curtain' is child's play beside this curtain of bureaucratic secrecy. The grossness of the maladministration of the endowments to temples goes veiled under devices such as accounts and vouchers and audit and supervision, but the results of none of them are allowed to reach the public. No one of the public knows whether all the rituals are performed or are performed duly. The safeguard of control by a Statutory Board is an illusion. The utter ineptitude of the administration of the temples and even the perversion of the institutions to purposes opposed to those for which they were founded is artfully concealed by attempts to represent criticism as interested or as proceeding from sectional motives.

If we have always to be on the guard against the state enlarging its functions and against its machinery getting a grip over the lives of the people it is all the more imperative that in this phase of our development we shall have to be highly critical of attempts at enlarging the scope of the state's intervention in our lives. We are in the midst of an unprecedented lowering of standards of probity and capacity, due initially to the needs of winning the war against the Axis, but persisting through the uncertainties of the aftermath and now threatening to become a permanent characteristic through the determination of every one who can pose as a hero of the War against Britain to turn into hard and immediate cash the myth of his near-martyrdom and to the opportunities which, in these circumstances, the man on the prowl has to build up for himself a pile irrespective of how he comes by it. These institutions are peculiarly liable to suffer from this decay in standards of conduct.

The only question in issue is not whether reform is needed but how it ought to be effected. That those who have no preconceptions are honestly persuading themselves that the state must indeed take over the control of these institutions shows that their vision has come to be limited by the vicious experiments of the past three quarters of a century which have been, in various degrees, taking effective administration from the hands of the people who are interested in these institutions and vesting it in a Hindu bureaucracy despising the Hindu public.

The proposals put forward by the Government will organise ecclesiastical administration and control in a manner to which no parallel may be found in any other country in which the state has the least pretence to be secular. The authors of the proposals have yet to tell us how when the people of this Province are fit enough to govern not only themselves but also Dravidistan and even to do better than the rest of India, the great majority of them, the Hindus, are yet unfit to manage

even petty religious institutions. Not the least reason is offered for not attempting to enable the Hindus to administer these institutions nor for obstinately insisting on the secular state taking up a task which not only is foreign to it but must also be obnoxious to it. Nor even does this Government pause and consider the significance of the phenomenon of support for its proposals coming mostly from those who scoff at these institutions or who seek to divert their funds from religious uses. This Government has only to thank itself if a puzzled public suspects its *bona fides* in persisting in state-control which, in the circumstances, is all too strange a solution.

## 2. *Vesting Control in the People*

Temples and Mathas cannot flourish unless they have the fullest support of those people who have faith in them. Control by a secular state may secure the vouchering of the expenses out of the present endowments, but it can secure little more: the images will be graced with voucher-malas instead of 'Vada-malas' and all else may cease. The temples will be preserved as ancient monuments and the temples and mathas will be run as shows from the dead past. In the heyday of their prosperity and influence they were administered by the people and not by the state in which they were organised. The great temples of Tirumalai, Chidambaram, Srirangam, Madurai and Rameswaram, for instance, with endowments and incomes much more ample than they now enjoy, were not administered by the state,—not even by the kings. It is no credit to this age which claims great advances in the people's enlightenment, public spirit, probity and efficiency that it should despair of administration by the people proving honest and efficient and should hasten to transfer the burden to the state.

The administrative machinery of the past has broken down through the weakening of the forces which have animated Hindu social and religious life. The state then, whether represented by a petty chieftain or by a powerful emperor, was, in effect, the embodiment of a homogeneous society animated by a common spirit and fully expressive of the purposes of that society. Even that state did not take up the management of these institutions. Our Government, however, representing a state which is the political expression of heterogeneous and multi-willed sections which are being egged on by political adventurers to antagonise each other is desperately anxious to take up not only the administration but also the direction of the purposes of these institutions.

We may not hope to re-introduce the old system of administration. It was so fashioned that it functioned without external stimulus or control, notwithstanding that it concerned itself with all the affairs of the institutions,—ritual, religion and social relations. It depended on a cleverly linked system of rights and duties. The activity of each institution was carved out into a number of spheres and the responsibility for each sphere was vested in a special authority which had also rights adequate enough to compensate it for the duties it undertook. The rights and the duties were so cleverly balanced and interlocked and the several

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spheres were so ingeniously made to overlap that those who ran the machine never allowed it to break down, at least because a failure in the duties spelt disaster to the rights. Every member of the administration felt passionately that any remissness on his part was a sin and every member of the public took it to be his personal duty to prevent hitches arising. The king or the chieftain was not slow to intervene if a breakdown was expected, but that intervention was only through men devoutly religious. The problems of administration raised now by these institutions are, however, ultimately the same as in the ages long past, for their fundamental purposes have undergone no change. But the temper of Hindu society has changed. The spirit of the age has to be reckoned with and machinery has to be devised which will do the same work as before but in a new atmosphere and to a new step and to a new tune.

Few are they, however, who read these pages who will have courage enough to believe that this is a season when it is wise to transfer these institutions to the mercies of popular control. The attitude of Hindu society to its age-old institutions has undergone a marked change in this part of the country: it is fashionable with many to hold up Hindu social organisation to opprobrium. But this is so, not because the value of Hinduism is not recognised but because its institutions are believed to stand in the way of social justice as understood in these days. We are only witnessing a shift in the emphasis on certain features of the Hindu social order. There is no such fundamental departure in the spirit as to warrant an apprehension that the change in public opinion will wreck or pervert these institutions. A failure to allow Hindu public opinion to revivify these institutions, adapting them to modern needs, may result in driving the public from them. Once we resuscitate faith and interest in the religious activities of the institutions the social frictions will cease to matter. The problem is not that of adjusting social differences but that of setting up and running machinery through which social and religious distempers will be healed.

From whichever angle we may canvass the problem we cannot but arrive at the conclusion that our state must abandon all thought of mixing itself up with these institutions. The secular state can have only that much of general supervision over their affairs as will prevent their becoming cancerous spots festering with a corruption that will endanger social order or security or morality. All other changes that may be needed in them to bring them in accord with such modern Hindu opinion as attaches importance to them and owes them allegiance must be left to be effected by the temple-and matha-minded section of Hindu society. The duty of the secular state is not to usurp the functions of these sections of Hindu society which are incorporated in it: on the other hand, the secular state must endeavour to enable these sections to order their institutions their own way. It must confine itself to its primary purpose of providing machinery for the Hindus interested in them ordering their affairs but ensuring that justice is done between the various groups and sections of its population in religious matters and that problems of the administration of religious institutions do not get trans-

formed into those of peace and order. It must arm those who believe in these institutions with powers to shape them to their purposes, without the intermeddling of even those who are weak in their faith in them,—not to speak of those who are opposed to them.

Judged by this test the Bill now on the anvil is a violent invasion of the secular state into the region of religion and religious organisation.

### 3. *The Bases of Re-organization*

The main lines along which provision need now be made for the proper functioning of Mathas and Temples are not hard to discern if only we realise the futility and the folly of what is being sought to be done. These institutions are being parted from those who are interested in them: the secular affairs are sought to be regulated without reference to the religious affairs: the religious affairs are being subordinated tacitly to the secular ones: the administration and control of both lay and religious affairs are being vested in bureaucratic bodies. There is no realisation of the supreme needs of these institutions. They and their adherents have to be brought together and their funds must be made to subserve their purposes. Machinery has to be designed for looking after the temporalities and the spiritualities of these institutions and for ensuring that the spiritualities are fed and nourished and inspired by the temporalities, and that the temporalities are, in turn, fed by those who believe in the validity of those spiritualities.

No code of administration generally applicable to Hindu religious institutions was framed in set terms in the days of their greatness, mainly because the principles were then so much a part of the mental make-up of the Hindu and they were so unquestioningly accepted that they needed no detailed formulation or express promulgation.

The social order which prescribed that the preceptor was to support the disciple during his pupilage and only reluctantly allowed him to accept gifts in return from the disciple could not have known either a disciple who questioned the preceptor about the propriety of his disposal of the offerings which he placed at his feet,—especially if the preceptor was a Mathadhipati who had come in the lineage of a series of distinguished teachers,—nor a preceptor who would have misapplied the offerings to purposes which the pupil would have recoiled from.

Temple administration is a theme which in effect was outside the scope of the Agamas, for, assuming both an understanding and a continuance of the social life and the political organization in which they were framed, they left unsaid many things on which, owing to changes in conditions and circumstances, we are now in need of light. For instance, the basic principle that most of the formalities of religious worship are all parallel to the formalities of a royal court is not found stated in any of the Agamas. The division of the divine services according to the watches of day and night, the differences in the music played at different hours and on different occasions, the waking the images at morn with music, the bathing them with eclat, the investing them with

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weapons and crowns, the decking them with ornaments, the making of offerings to them of food and the like, the burning of incense, the waving of lights, the wearing the *uttariya* by the worshipper round his waist, the ranging the worshippers in the order of precedence, the chanting of praises by accredited chanters, the announcing of the great presence, the receiving of offerings and the returning of presents, the distributing the oil of consecration and the water of the sacred bath, the distributing the *prasadas* of different kinds, the placing the lord's feet on the crown of the devotee, the granting of audience in the great courtyard, the singing and the dancing by the corps of *dasis*, the progress through the great streets on ceremonial occasions on coursers or in *rathas*, the retiring to the bed-chamber,—these are but a few of the usages of temples similar to those of the royal court. Other usages also are not unknown: they are all additions to meet sectarian and sectional observances.

But the rationale of all this is being forgotten. The disappearance of royalty in this part of the country about two centuries back, the shortness of our memories, the decay in traditional culture, the imputing them to merely sectional reasons, and the proneness to invent new reasons for securing recognition for rights and honours from a system of law which set up strange standards, have in this Province obliterated from the Hindu mind almost every trace of the rationale of observances such as these in temples.

These principles and usages are so fundamental to these institutions that nothing should be done that will invalidate them, though many will deem it wise that opportunity is not denied for the gradual adoption of new usages to suit new circumstances when the conscience of those owing allegiance to these institutions permits them.

Hindus have never owned allegiance in faith to any one common head, secular or spiritual. Divided into numerous religious groups and wisely exercising a wide tolerance, they had no occasion to look for a common head. There never was a central lay or spiritual authority to which all Hindu religious institutions were subordinate in regard to any of their activities, though the state, being then Hindu, exercised a general supervision through deeply devout authorities to prevent scandalous maladministration. The individuality of the institutions of the several sects and sections has grown up through the ages and should be preserved, and yet the sects and sections should all be drawn together to set up and maintain high standards of administration and to combine in forwarding the cause of religion.

Many of these institutions are sectional. The worshippers in each such temple or the disciples of each such matha belong to only one community or just a few, though in theory those temples and mathas may be open to all Hindus. Many are sectarian in the rituals and in the observances and usages, though they do not preclude those of other sects from worshipping in them, provided they do not claim to participate in certain of the observances and usages. Many

of them are worshipped in by devotees irrespective of the gods to which they are dedicated, while others are not places of general worship. Quite a large number are founded according to the Agamas while an even large number are based on local or communal usages. Naturally, these institutions cannot be organised on the pattern of one archetype and the organization has to vary with the composition of the group, the character of the sect, the nature of the rituals and the arrangements made for the conduct of certain of the observances. These differences have to be preserved and allowed to express themselves in the organization of the institutions concerned. If any attempt at eliminating them is considered desirable it should be effected in stages by the public itself as public opinion grows, allowing of the more conservative members of the sections and the sects reconciling themselves to the changes.

It has not to be forgotten that the large endowments which direct hungry eyes to these institutions have grown through the ages from the gifts of innumerable devotees who dedicated the properties without any notion that the fundamental principles and usages of these institutions will not continue to be observed. Nor has it to be forgotten that the fame of these institutions has grown through the consecrated devotion of generations of devotees who have rendered honorary services in them in the full belief that the system of rituals and observances which they had participated in is of eternal validity and will continue to be observed in the ages to come. If, hereafter, too, any endowments are made and any services are rendered in these institutions it will be only in the belief that the spirit of the past broods over and sanctifies and blesses the future, for donors who have no such faith will render their support, not to temples and mathas, but to such charities as their 'modern' mentality might incline them to. There can be no transformations in the rituals and observances and no application of the endowments to other purposes than those for which they were founded though there should be no bar placed on the ordered growth of modifications in consonance with the fundamental principles to suit changing conditions.

Every temple and matha should, therefore, be administered in conformity, not with notions of what we decide to be proper either in our ignorance of the abiding principles of the religion or in the burning enthusiasm of our zeal to rectify what we may feel to be its infirmities, but with the wishes of those who have over centuries been lavish with their properties and services, and made the institutions what they were in the days of their glory. Should any enthusiast, in the amplitude of his greater wisdom or of superior enlightenment, hold otherwise it is for him to found new institutions and to endow them with ample funds in justification of his faith and his enlightenment. He may not intrude his notions into institutions which, owing none of their spirit or resources to him, derive their greatness from the sacrifices of those of another way of thinking and embody a different spirit.

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From these general considerations follow a number of conclusions of which two may be referred to by way of example. Firstly, those Hindus who do not believe in temples and mathas and those who have no regard for their principles, observances and usages can have no right to participate in their administration or to shape their policy. Secondly, the character which a temple or a matha has acquired in the course of the centuries should be preserved: it is the established customs, practices and usages of each institution that should prevail and should determine how its affairs should be administered.

The need for guaranteeing the established customs, usages, observances, rights, honours, and the like has been recognised in theory, existing legislation leaving them unaffected, but adequate machinery for ascertaining what they are and for enforcing them when ascertained has been lacking. They are as good as negatived in many cases. It is of the first importance that judicial ascertainment and effective enforcement should be provided for.

The matters that arise in these religious institutions are divisible into four groups,—the secular, the religious, the social and the mixed. Social matters are not likely to give rise to much of friction, for most points in regard to them are well settled by usages and customs. New difficulties may be expected to be settled by a process of give and take, once the administration is vested in persons and bodies responsive to public opinion. The differences that may be whipped up to create social distempers will prove so complex that rash experiments will be brought to an early halt. The conscience of Hindu society may be trusted to assert itself over wild plans and projects. It should therefore be enough to provide machinery for only the other three groups of problems.

### 4. *A Project of Re-organization*

With these principles and their corollaries and implications in mind there should be no difficulty in framing legislation for the proper administration of these institutions and their endowments. An attempt is made below to suggest a framework of organisations which, it is believed, conforms to the principles outlined above.<sup>1</sup>

The scheme is by no means a complicated one. The complexity of the organisation of religious activities in the West in their innumerable forms being unknown to us in this country, we are apt to consider any

<sup>1</sup> In March 1940 I had occasion, in conversation, to mention a few of these ideas to Sir T. G. Rutherford, C.S.I., C.I.E., who, as 'Adviser' to the Governor of Madras, had then before him a Bill on the subject which, during the tenure of office of the 'Congress Ministry' of 1938-39, had been prepared by Dr. T. S. S. Rajan, Minister for the subject, and was considering the advisability of publishing it so as to prepare the ground for the 'Popular Ministry' inevitable on the War coming to a close. On his desire that I would set my ideas down in a Memorandum for him I drafted two plans,—a simple one dealing with only the major problems and a full one marking a radical departure, but both of them based on the principles urged here. He preferred the simpler scheme, as was but natural in one not a Hindu. The 'Adviser's Government' abandoned ultimately the idea of seeking public opinion on Dr. Rajan's Bill. It is this Bill which, in substance, is the measure now before the Madras Legislature. The scheme presented by me here is a version of the fuller of the two plans which I had placed before Sir T. G. Rutherford.



comprehensive proposal for religious organisation in this country to be complicated, not realising that our problems are even more involved than those of western religious sections and sects.

Mathas are usually sectarian institutions, and often sectional too. They offer, therefore, few difficulties in organization. If the position of the Mathadhipati *vis à vis* the disciples and the endowments is settled, the rest will automatically adjust itself.

Howsoever a Mathadhipati may be appointed according to the usages of his Matha, he must be liable to removal if the disciples are dissatisfied with him, expressing their wishes through, for instance, a Committee of Disciples or through a general vote in which, say, a sixty per cent majority is needed, or a combination of both. The Mathadhipati should have exclusive authority to admit such one as he chooses to discipleship but a removal therefrom should be liable to approval by a Committee of Disciples. Any disciple may at any time forswear discipleship. A fair percentage of the income of each Matha from all sources should be assigned to the Mathadhipati for being spent by him in his absolute discretion and the balance should be administered through a Committee of Disciples in which the Mathadhipati is represented. All the endowments of the Matha should be under the administration of that Committee. Doctrine and other matters of religion including propaganda, should be decided on by the Mathadhipati in collaboration with a Committee of disciples of learning, devotion and character, of whom one half will be nominated by him and the other half by the disciples. Matters that are intermediate between, or a mixture of, secular and religious matters should be decided on by a joint Committee of Secular and Religious Committees. Frequent meetings of disciples at the different centres where they may be in strength and convocations of all the disciples at a central place whenever occasion may arise should be insisted upon.

Temples being more complex institutions than Mathas, their administration and control are bound to be more complicated.

Those who are interested in a temple are of different classes,—those who are worshippers, those who also contribute to the funds and those who render religious ‘services’. These three classes should be organized separately into groups for each temple, for each local area, each district or other convenient region and for the whole Province. The worshippers in a temple are naturally an important group and their voice has to be heeded to. Those who contribute funds to that temple are those who generally keep the temple going,—whether the contributions be in the shape of lump donations or of petty offerings of money or of offerings for *archanas* or of the performance of festivals or *Ubhayams* or other services. In this class must be included the descendants of those whose ancestors have endowed foundations for the services in the temple. These should be put into a second group in regard to that temple. The contributors of services in that temple form a group including those who officiate as priests, as chanters of hymns,—the Prabandha, the Veda and the Tirup-Padiyam, or instance—as

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Pauranikas, and as volunteers offering their services in any of the religious activities of the temple. These are generally ill-paid for their services,—where they are paid at all,—and it is mainly their devotion that keeps them at their posts. It is principally on this group that the burden of the ritual and the religious services in temples falls and it is they who can ensure that they are competently and regularly rendered. That in the smaller temples they are usually too few in numbers to serve as checks on one another is no reason for placing the responsibility for the due discharge of the services on others who could, in the circumstances, be none other than lay authorities ignorant of ritual or observances. We cannot but trust to these and they have generally devotion enough to justify the trust. Usually there are enough laymen in each local area who know enough to detect infractions and if only their co-operation is secured,—as will be secured if re-organization proceeds on the lines sketched here,—there will be adequate checks on the possible vagaries of the actual officiants. The representatives of the group of worshippers and of the group of contributors of funds should together have the control of the secular administration of the temple. Representatives of the group of contributors of service should have the control of the rituals and observances in the temple. All these representatives together should have the administration of the mixed matters of the temple. These representatives will be elected for a term of, say, one year, by those on two corresponding electoral rolls for each temple. Some mode of election securing ‘proportional representation’ at each stage is essential.

Lest, however, the more enterprising among the local representatives misuse their position in the temple and lest the rancour of local factions affect the even tenor of the administration, it is of the utmost importance that the local representatives in each temple should have associated with them a set of persons similarly interested, but nominated by a larger group, such as that for the district or region or the section.

It goes without saying that in the case of the great temples the representatives of the larger territorial divisions should have powers enough to ensure that the administration is carried on, not for the benefit of the local interests alone, but for the benefit of all believing Hindus all over the region or the Province or even the whole of India, according to the importance of each temple. In those temples where there are numerous sources of income and expenditure, and various rituals and festivals, there should be small committees which will have the supervision of the collection and the disbursement of each such major activity.

Where a number of temples are situate in a local area, the representatives comprising the several committees of the several temples should be formed into a grand committee for the local area for purposes of co-ordination of efforts. They should be free to form sub-groups in accordance with the several sects and the sections to which their institutions belong. The local areas may vary in extent depending on the number of institutions which may conveniently be grouped together.

The several classes of representatives in a local area, or of institutions of sections, where they are so grouped together, should elect district committee or regional committees and these should together, in their turn, elect the Provincial Committees,—one for secular purposes and another for religious purposes, at every stage. These two, at every stage, should together form the Grand Committee for mixed purposes, at each stage. Membership of the higher Committees should not be confined to members of the lower Committees and it should always be possible to provide places for distinguished persons who may not care to offer themselves for election. This provision may even be expanded to make good a defect that appears on the surface. The bulk of Hindus in this Province are not disciples of Mathas and, yet, if this scheme is adopted, the representatives of Mathas will have a voice in the administration of the institutions while those Hindus who are not attached to Mathas will go without any influence on their management or their policy. This is not as it should be, for these preceptors and these disciples form important sections of the Hindu community. This should not be difficult to get over. Every non-Matha preceptor,—Acharya-Purusha or Desika,—who has a certain number of disciples can be allowed to be represented in the committees for religious purposes by nominees of his own and of his disciples, by an adaptation of the method suggested for the Mathas. These committees should be in session as often as may be necessary. Ordinarily they should function, when not in session, through standing committees. The members of the Grand Committees for each area or section should every year elect a panel of Presidents from among those qualified to be members of the relevant Committee for religious purposes and the members of the panel should, say, in quarterly rotation hold the Presidentship of the Grand Committee. These dignitaries,—the members of the several committees,—should be shown such honours as may be decided on in the course of the years.

Every higher Committee should supervise the activities of every Committee below it,—inspecting the affairs of each institution within its jurisdiction and supervising the administration. Every decision of a lower Committee should be liable to be revised by the corresponding higher Committee.

The administrative problems of Mathas and Temples not being fundamentally different, certain provisions may be common to both.

A representative at any level should be liable to be debarred from serving as such, temporarily or permanently, for misconduct found by a higher authority and should be liable to be surcharged on the decree of the tribunals mentioned below. Every decision or act of every one of these authorities without jurisdiction, which is not set aside by the immediately higher authority within a month or so, should be liable to be quashed by the civil courts of the country. All accounts and all papers,—except those that may relate to the title to properties or to matters of equal gravity,—should be open to general inspection.

## THE SECULAR STATE AND MATHAS AND TEMPLES

Every institution should publish full periodical reports of its accounts and activities.

A ministerial staff for each institution is absolutely indispensable but its function should be merely that of carrying out the routine administration subject to the several authorities of the institutions and the directions of higher authorities. This ministerial establishment of each matha and temple, except the personal staff of Mathadhipatis, should be recruited and ultimately controlled by the All-Province organization, while the immediate control should be in each institution.

For the adjudication of disputes regarding customs, usages, observances, honours, rights and the like there should be a series of 'ecclesiastical' tribunals bound to adjudicate according to the established customs *et cetera* of the respective institutions, and otherwise, according to 'ecclesiastical' law. Disputes on such matters as purely civil obligations arising in these institutions, disputes regarding elections and the like, will naturally continue to be within the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts of the land. Those ecclesiastical tribunals that exercise original jurisdiction should be held at convenient local centres, and appellate jurisdiction must vest in an ecclesiastical High Court the decisions of which will be final, except on issues raising pure matters of civil law, in regard to which an appeal should lie to the High Court of the Province. The judges of the ecclesiastical courts should have been engaged in active practice in the 'civil' courts and should have a special knowledge of what may in these institutions correspond to ecclesiastical law and practice. The judges of the ecclesiastical High Court should be appointed by the Governor of the Province on the advice of the two seniormost temple-matha-believing judges of the High Court of the Province and the two top-most members of the Provincial Council of representatives for religious affairs. These tribunals should have adequate powers and machinery to enforce their decisions.

The proceedings of all these authorities should be in the light of full publicity. The decisions of the ecclesiastical High Court should be 'reported' and be treated as binding precedents.

These are mere outlines which are roughly sketched for consideration by all those interested in these institutions. The picture that emerges may not be as clear as a draftsman of a statute requires but it is clear enough to enable the reader to appreciate what is aimed at. The controlling bodies will be as varied as the institutions themselves,—with variations of every grade in the worshipping groups, the rituals, the observances, the festivals, the resources, the zones of appeal,—and yet they will stand knit together in an attempt to evoke what is best in these institutions and to utilise them for the rejuvenation of Hinduism. The scheme is indeed something which, while creating a body that will effectively serve its immediate purpose, will at the same time help to evolve the new Hinduism that many are hoping for.

# THE SISTERS

(One Act Play)

By K. Gopalkrishna Rao

Rendered from Kannada by T. V. Aswatha Narayana Rao, M.A.

[Rao Bahadur Ranga Rao chose Bangalore as his residence after his retirement. He has two daughters, Kamala and Vatsala. Kamala, the elder, is an M.A. She has joined the staff of Women's College after spending a few years of lonely life at home. Vatsala, the younger, is prosecuting her studies in the College. Their mother had passed away when they were young. Since then Ranga Rao has remained a widower.]

Ranga Rao met Professor Krishnaswamy on the Nilgiris, where he was staying during the previous summer. Educated in England Krishnaswamy returned to Bangalore as a professor of English in the Central College, after spending a few years as lecturer in a college in the North. His visits to Ranga Rao at Bangalore were frequent. The beauty of Vatsala had captured his heart while at the Nilgiris. Kamala was in love with Prof. Krishnaswamy. But when she realised that Prof. Krishnaswamy loved her sister, she buried her own longing deep down in her heart and made the necessary arrangements to bring to fruition her sister's alliance with the Professor. This was the day fixed by Kamala to decide the date of the wedding.]

Kamala is busy with 'answer' books. The song emanating from the Radio throws a peculiar glamour on the day's function. Keeping the papers aside, Kamala seats herself on a sofa, and relaxes: her eyes are half-closed. Then, she gets up, takes up Krishnaswamy's photograph, gazes at it for a while, and occupies the sofa, lost in thought. The Grandfather Clock strikes three. Music over, news is announced. She closes down the radio).

KAMALA: Three! *Rahu-kala* will begin at half past four. I asked him to be here at a quarter to four ... said that would be too early ... too early indeed! How foolish of me to expect these foreign-returned scholars to have faith in *Rahu* and *Guli Kalas*. (Calls)—Narayana! Narayana!

(Enter Narayan, apparelled in dhoti and mull-shirt. Added to this, his finely combed 'crop' and lips red with the betel juice, would make one mistake him for a Tanjore musician than an ordinary family cook. To be a film star is his pet fancy. And his previous attempts to follow the music lessons given to Kamala and Vatsala have fixed his imagination that way).

NARAYAN: Yes?

KAMALA: You seem to have fixed up some programme already?

NARAYAN: Yes. I'm off to a matinee show.

## THE SISTERS

KAMALA: No. Not today. The Professor is expected. You must be here and prepare some sweets.

NARAYAN: How can I, if you ask at this hour? I must visit the cinema today.

KAMALA: Drop it. You may as well go tomorrow.

NARAYAN: No. Nothing of that sort.

KAMALA: What? Do you dare contradict me just because we have looked upon you as one of ourselves from the days of your boyhood?

NARAYAN: How else? After all, my visits to the cinema are once in a week and you wouldn't allow even that.

KAMALA: Who objects? Only, not today. Do as you wish tomorrow.

NARAYAN: Today must I go and that to the matinee show itself. Coffee decoction is in the filter and hot milk in the thermo's. Mix them and have coffee at any time you want to. If you don't approve of my behaviour, well, tell the master and accept my resignation now. A few music tuitions, and I earn four times the salary you pay me. If I were to be a film star! Ah! Then, ten times your petty wages.

(Narayan disappears)

KAMALA: Hallo there, Narayan ... Gone! Yes, yes, times have changed and we must adjust ourselves to the ways of these servants of ours. (Goes near the door and shouts) Bora! Bora! (Instead of Bora, enter Ranga Rao).

RANGA RAO: Why, Kamala? I have sent him on some errand. The driver is on leave. Bora is to ask the doctor to send me his car direct from the club.

KAMALA: Can't you give up your club today, father?

RANGA RAO: Why, my dear?

KAMALA: I have invited the professor and he will be here at a quarter past four. We must fix the wedding day and other details. And, by the way, our Sanskrit Pandit was here this morning and he informed me that either the 26th of this month or the 2nd of the next, are auspicious days. Your presence is quite essential to decide these matters.

RANGA RAO: Yes, yes. But...

KAMALA: But what?

RANGA RAO: What I want to say is ... What's the hurry for Vatsala's marriage before yours is over?

KAMALA: (Laughing) My marriage! Am I of marriageable age? Oh father, put that idea aside.

RANGA RAO: After all, you're ...

KAMALA: Such talk won't help, father (sighs). After all, he loves Vatsala and let us celebrate their marriage. (Kamala gets up, goes near her mother's photograph on the wall and stands with her eyes fixed on it. Ranga Rao seats himself on the sofa, his eyes rest on Kamala for a while. A deep sigh escapes from his breast).

## TRIVENI

RANGA RAO: Kamala, come here.

KAMALA: Father, I've too much on my hands. Narayan has taken a day off and I'm left here to look after all the preparations.

RANGA RAO: Why bother about preparations, my dear. The fruits and biscuits you brought yesterday will suffice. Please do sit beside me.

(Kamala takes the other sofa. Silence for a while).

RANGA RAO: I've done you a great injustice, Kamala.

KAMALA: Well ...

RANGA RAO: I didn't give you in marriage in time. I was indifferent. Thought of educating you, and as a result I've neglected a father's primary duty.

KAMALA: Father dear, why think of things past? Here is Vatsala's marriage and let's proceed with it.

RANGA RAO: People offered themselves. I had not even the worry of searching for one. Your beauty, your sweet disposition that was enough. Yet, I ... lost in the false glamour of official status, turned down all of them. Scoffed at Raghavendra Rao—then my subordinate ... now, today far better off than myself. I didn't think of your age; I was blind to your feelings; failed to realise the craving of a young woman's heart.

KAMALA: Father, I mean to withdraw Rupees two thousand from the treasury.

RANGA RAO: Have it withdrawn, five thousand if you want, and spend it. Why worry about money? When in office, I forgot my home, my family. That's all. And she, she died with the single thought of your marriage gnawing at her heart ... Kamala, are you to remain unmarried for ever?

KAMALA: Father, I've told you not to worry about me. I know my future. I have decided. It's already getting late and he will be here shortly. (Kamala goes within. Ranga Rao approaches his wife's photograph and stands there for a while. A car hoots outside and Dr. Swaminathan enters).

DOCTOR: Hallo, Raoji—not yet dressed?

RANGA RAO: Hallo, Doctor, please be seated. I really can't accompany you. I must remain at home today.

DOCTOR: May I know the reason?

RANGA RAO: Preparations for Vatsala's marriage are afoot. Professor Krishnaswamy will be here presently. It's Kamala's desire that I should be here.

DOCTOR: My dear friend, you know well with what distinction Kamala is serving in her college! Oh! she is a born leader. She can manage everything. After all, what's there for you to do here?

RANGA RAO: She's just like her mother.

DOCTOR: That's true.

RANGA RAO: Oh! Doctor! if only she'd be married! What a happy life it would be for her!

## THE SISTERS

DOCTOR: Well, she is to remain a maid—that's her fate! to keep home for you. And you ought not to miss the Bridge-party today. Doctor Gopaldaswamy will be there.

RANGA RAO: But then . . .

DOCTOR: Oh! come on. Kamala will manage everything all right.

RANGA RAO: No . . . no . . . no . . . Kamala will misunderstand me.

DOCTOR: I'll tell her. Why hesitate? Go on! Dress up!

(Exit Ranga Rao, and the Doctor calls—Kamala!)

KAMALA: (From within) Hallo, Doctor, just a minute. (Enter Kamala. Fresh from a recent bath and with a new, gracefully worn saree. A tiny dot of Kumkum adorns her forehead. A weariness of over-work and disgust in life show themselves clearly: yet there is no lack of beauty and charm in her).

Hallo, doctor, so glad that you're here. We are to fix up the date of Vatsala's marriage and the Professor will be here presently. Please be seated.

DOCTOR: Good, very good, indeed.

KAMALA: By your blessings, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Nothing is too great for you. (Enter Ranga Rao dressed up). Fix it up among yourselves. After all, what can we, old men, do here?

KAMALA: (Looking at Ranga Rao). Father?

RANGA RAO: Well, I'm off to the club. Do what you please. Here, take this, be careful. It is a blank one and only a bearer cheque. (Places the cheque-book on a small table and starts out).

KAMALA: Am I to carry on all this alone?

DOCTOR: Afraid. You acted as the Principal of your college and we're proud of that. That reports praise you so much. Further, our presence may prove a hindrance to your talks. Come on, Raoji.

(Depart Ranga Rao and Doctor)

KAMALA: Father! (sound of car starting). Alone. Alone must I face the whole ordeal! Oh God! What's this my lot? Well . . . Well. At least, Vatsala will be here.

(Vatsala, dressed in ultra-modern fashion, enters humming the tune of a popular song. At the sight of her sister, steps back startled, rearranges the fold of her saree).

KAMALA: God bless you with a hundred years of life! Just now I was thinking of you, dear.

VATSALA: Sister, will you play that tune for me?

KAMALA: Oh! dear! it is such a long time since my fingers played on the strings.

VATSALA: Oh! do play.

KAMALA: Why so particular?

Vatsala: You must, today.

KAMALA: Yes. Yes.

VATSALA: Shall I accompany the song with dance too. All I care for is your approval.



## TRIVENI

(Dashes in, and enters to the sound of tinkling bells, tuned to the rhythmic notes of the song).

KAMALA: (Tuning the Veena) Now for a dance!

(Dance and Song)

KAMALA: That's not bad. And that for a disciple of Rukmini Devi. How I wish the professor were here! Take up some song and he will be here presently.

(Kamala again tunes the Veena).

VATSALA: Why will he be here?

KAMALA: (With a smile) Why? Well, you will know in good time.

VATSALA: My programme at the college can't be cancelled, sister dear.

KAMALA: (Keeps down the Veena) No...no...what's up?

VATSALA: Miss Brown is leaving for England with the Captain, her betrothed. I am to give a recital. And this was its rehearsal. Saru and Sashi are to play the instruments for me.

KAMALA: Miss Brown? Your English teacher? We have a better function at home. The fixing up of the wedding day.

VATSALA: Wedding day? Whose wedding day?

KAMALA: (Drawing Vatsala to her bosom) Yours, sister dear.

VATSALA: (Freeing herself) I don't want to marry. I am not going to be married.

KAMALA: What!

VATSALA: I won't marry.

KAMALA: Don't be silly. He admires you. And your behaviour in his presence has convinced us of your love for him.

VATSALA: There, you are wrong.

KAMALA: Well, look here, Vatsala. I should say that you are very lucky to have him as your partner in life. A cultured, highly educated, young...

VATSALA: I don't know all that. I don't care. I am not going to marry anybody.

KAMALA: What? Do you wish to remain thus forever without marriage?

VATSALA: Why not? I would also like to be as independent as you are.

KAMALA: Vatsa, if only you could take a peep into my heart. A slip of a girl—how can you realise my pain there—deep down in my heart!

VATSALA: I know, I know. Principal of a college, with prestige, power, and wealth...cars and servants at command...and honour and respect and obedience... (Kamala is a bit taken aback by this unusual talk, strange, coming from her sister. She is silently staring at Vatsala).

I know why you want me to be married. To inherit father's property, eh!

## THE SISTERS

KAMALA: (Gasps) Va...tsa...la!

VATSALA: Look here, Kamala. He is cultured, highly educated, young ... you said this, didn't you?—Well, why don't *you* marry him? (Sound of a car stopping. Both turn towards door, expecting Krishnaswamy).

VATSALA: (Goes out and returns) Saru and Sashi are waiting. I'm off. (Pain is visible on Kamala's face, pain that her sister should behave thus. Her eyes are wet with tears. Vatsala comes back to her.)

VATSALA: I'm sorry, dear.

(Deep sorrow bubbles up in Kamala's heart. Sits with her head buried in her hands. The horn sounds. Vatsala departs. Silence reigns, with only the silent weeping of Kamala and the ticking of the clock to deepen the loneliness. Lifting up her head, she accosts Krishnaswamy's photograph near the table and places the photo upside down. Stands as one dazed. Approaching her mother's photograph, books full into it, and collapses with a weird cry of 'Ma!' (Enter Krishnaswamy. He stares in bewilderment and silence for a while).

KRISHNASWAMY: Miss Kamala!

(Kamala raises her head and looks at Krishnaswamy. Ashamed, she slips inside. Krishnaswamy replaces his photograph properly. Takes up a necklace box and keeps it on the table. Then seats himself on the sofa. Kamala enters. A forced smile is playing on her lips; hesitation and fear lurk in her face. Krishnaswamy stands up and Kamala takes the other sofa.)

KAMALA: Please be seated, Mr. Krishnaswamy.

KRISHNASWAMY: Pardon me, Miss Kamala, for my entry without previous announcement. The peon was not to be found.

KAMALA: Oh! That's all right. After all, you are one of us now.

KRISHNASWAMY: So soon! I very much wished to play the part of a son-in-law.

KAMALA: Oh! Do as you please. After all, you are a learned man.

KRISHNASWAMY: Well, Miss Kamala. I was to leave for Delhi today, but that couldn't be without your permission. I have cancelled it and sent a telegram.

KAMALA: Oh! That only shows your generosity. You need not to have done that. Vatsala is lucky to have you!

KRISHNASWAMY: May...May I know—excuse me if I seem to be a bit impertinent. Why were you shedding tears before your mother's picture? (Kamala is silent)...Perhaps I ought not to have asked that question. But ... there ... there it is .. (Kamala still keeps silent) ... Pardon me if it goes against your wish...

KAMALA: Oh! no, not at all.

KRISHNASWAMY: Perhaps Vatsala's marriage prior to yours caused these tears?

KAMALA: What of that? After all, Vatsala is just like a daughter to me.

## TRIVENI

KRISHNASWAMY: Yes... Yes... But...

KAMALA: (Cuts him short with) Well, Mr. Krishnaswamy, our Sanskrit Pandit was here this morning in connection with the examination papers and he is of the opinion that the 20th of this or the 2nd of next month are quite auspicious. Let me get you some tea. (She goes inside).

KRISHNASWAMY: A remarkable woman! Proves herself to be as good a housewife as she has proved to be the Principal of a College.

(Enter Kamala with a tray full of biscuits, fruits and tea-cups. Krishnaswamy gets up, and places a teapoy between the two sofas. Kamala places the tray on the teapoy and turns on the radio). Why only for two? What about your father?

KAMALA: He's at the club. He wanted to stay and had even asked the driver to take a holiday. But Dr. Swaminathan compelled him to go with him on some urgent errand.

KRISHNASWAMY: Your sister?

KAMALA: She will be here presently. Please go on. I too will join you. (Mixes coffee). Sugar?

KRISHNASWAMY: (Tasting) Oh! I expected tea.

KAMALA: (Rising) Sure! You shall have it.

KRISHNASWAMY: What about your cook?

KAMALA: (With a passing shadow of shame). He is on leave.

KRISHNASWAMY: Please don't worry. Coffee is more to my taste than tea.

KAMALA: About your relatives, who is to be present for the preliminary ceremony?

KRISHNASWAMY: 'Preliminary?'

KAMALA: I mean, your elders.

KRISHNASWAMY: My brother and sister-in-law will do. I will ask them to go over here for the function. They are at Kollegal.

KAMALA: I was thinking--whom to invite on our side! May I know which of the dates will suit you? 26th is too near. 2nd, I think, will be better. (Krishnaswamy is lost in some thought; his eyes rest on Kamala's bowed face). We can arrange for a choultry. As for the musicians, those who played on our College Day will do. Oh! would you prefer a Tanjore set? (Krishnaswamy is as one deaf). After all, our set is not bad and let us encourage our own artistes. There is the music master of Vatsala too...well...Here is a cheque for five hundred rupees. Father gave that for you to cover the expenses of presentations to be made to you. (Krishnaswamy's eyes are dilated; something queer seems to play hide and seek within them). We shall have the property registered in Vatsala's name well before the wedding day. Surely, I know you are not taking her because of the money: Vatsala is all you want. (Krishnaswamy continues to be silent. His face mirrors some intense struggle within)... Oh! another cup of coffee?

KRISHNASWAMY: (Gasping) Kamala!

KAMALA: (A bit shaken) Yes?

## THE SISTERS

(Kamala lifts her bowed head. Her upward gaze merges in Krishnaswamy's. Their hearts tremble, as if in sudden close contact; they shiver. Kamala drops her head).

KRISHNASWAMY: Kamala, I know everything. Bora told me the whole story. Your father at the club, and why he is there... "Without Miss Kamala Heaven knows what'd have become of this house!" he exclaimed... And your mother died—how your father neglected to arrange for your marriage... Your great affection for Vatsala... I know the whole story, Kamala!

KAMALA: Oh! that old owl! Where's he gone?

KRISHNASWAMY: I tipped him a rupee and he's in the bazaar.

KAMALA: Oh! (with a smile). You seem to unearth all the family secrets by your tipping, eh?

(Kamala gets up and hands him a cup of coffee).

KRISHNASWAMY: I was thinking all the way over here, if you would agree. (Kamala, suddenly surprised, drops the cup. Coffee spills) Oh! What's that? (Tries to clean it with his handkerchief).

KAMALA: Oh! Nothing. (Goes inside hurriedly, switching off the radio as she passes).

(Krishnaswamy gets up and slowly paces the room. Tries the strings of the Veena and expresses satisfaction. Kamala re-enters with a pure white saree and a white georgette blouse).

KRISHNASWAMY: Oh! Mistook you for Vatsala! That dress... who plays the Veena? Vatsala?

KAMALA: Vatsala is trained in vocal music. She has a fine voice and she has added dance too to her accomplishments. Trained at Adyar.

KRISHNASWAMY: Then do you play on the Veena?

KAMALA: Oh! It is years since I played on it.

KRISHNASWAMY: You seem to be quite clever at putting me off! See, (touches off the strings) there! It is tuned and tuned perfectly! (Not knowing what to do, Kamala stands still, with bowed head).

Now you must play. Understand?

KAMALA: Order?

KRISHNASWAMY: A request!

(Having no choice, Kamala takes up the Veena. While her supple fingers waft enthralling music, they unconsciously give expression to the sorrow and turmoil in the heart of the player. Lost in her creation, it seems to Kamala as if she is coming in the way of Vatsala,—Vatsala whom she brought up from the cradle and made her what she is today. Should she brush her aside and reap for herself the benefit of marriage? No...No...)

KAMALA: (Hysterically) No...No...No...

KRISHNASWAMY: What's it, Kamala?

KAMALA: Oh! nothing. Somehow my fingers go crazy. Vatsala will be here presently and you may feast on her song. Such an angelic voice!

## TRIVENI

**KRISHNASWAMY:** Vatsala won't be here and she won't sing. I wanted to take her to some picture with your permission. I'd even informed her of my going over here today. I saw her now, on her way to the college with her friends. She averted her eyes as soon as she saw me. So proud! (with a deep sigh). True, I fell a prey to her beauty on the Nilgiris, at first sight. It seemed as though she was dancing on my heart. Well, to make a long story short, I fell in love with her. Then I met you here. (Silence for while). Mr. Ranga Rao too would approve of our marriage.

(Kamala gets up. Krishnaswamy takes out the necklace from its container on the table and approaches Kamala). This, bought for Vatsala, but if you are pleased to accept (Kamala is lost in contemplation of her mother's photograph)...I have been observing Vatsala's attitude towards me. A very haughty girl. I...

**KAMALA:** Oh! no, please. I should say you are wrong there. She is yet a girl. Maybe, she is a bit hasty. You mustn't take it so much to heart. You don't know her. She is such a jewel!

**KRISHNASWAMY:** What do I care for her now?

(Places the necklace on the table)

**KAMALA:** Please don't speak thus.

(Sound of a car stopping. Enter Vatsala. Flying like a heavenly being, still humming her recital song. Krishnaswamy is overpowered. His heart hovers once again round Vatsala).

**VATSALA:** I'd fears that you might be away in anger. I ran back pleading some excuse.

**KRISHNASWAMY:** I simply can't believe you. You didn't return for me.

**VATSALA:** Truly, it was the tears in my sister's eyes that brought me back. (Goes to the table and adorning herself with the necklace, faces Krishnaswamy) Oh! it is lovely! (Looks at Kamala). What do you say, Mamma? (At the word—'Mamma' Kamala's eyes well up, something chokes her voice).

**KAMALA:** Your marriage is fixed, Vatsa, on the 2nd. Better you visit the picture. Let me fill in the cheque. (Tears off the leaf and hands it to her sister). Here, Vatsa, give this to him... There's some coffee. Is it cold?

**VATSALA:** But your heart is so warm, sister, dear!

**KAMALA:** Oh!...But now, hurry up. May be late to the show.

**KRISHNASWAMY:** But...

**KAMALA:** (Turning a deaf ear to his words, drawing Vatsala to her bosom, like a mother). Now. (In a gentle voice low, yet firm and steady). Don't be a silly girl any more. Learn to understand the Professor's wishes. Don't forget you are a Hindu girl.

**KRISHNASWAMY:** But I...

**KAMALA:** You will be happy with Vatsala. She gives you everything. Please don't get upset if, on occasions, she is silly. Patience is the great thing which can render life happy.

## THE SISTERS

(Krishnaswamy looks at Kamala. Then at her mother's photograph. Something moves his heart. He tries to bow to Kamala) Oh! no...no...please. You are older than I.

VATSALA: (Bending low and touching Kamala's feet with her forehead) You are now our real mother!

(Enter Narayan)

KAMALA: (To Narayan) Over?

NARAYAN: It is true, madam, I entered the theatre. But I simply could not stand it. My heart was here. I've returned. What shall I prepare?

KAMALA: After all, you were there and you could have sat till the end. Professor will be here for supper. Perhaps he too must have been fed up with his hostel stuff. Prepare something sweet and nice. Here! (Hands him some change). Poor chap! Lost his money without the show.

KRISHNASWAMY: (*Sotto voce*)

"A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
To warm, to comfort, to command.  
And yet a spirit still, and bright  
With something of an angel light."

(Enter Ranga Rao)

RANGA RAO: It is so kind of you to accept my daughter's hand, Professor.

(Both look at Kamala)

KAMALA: Vatsala's marriage is fixed for the 2nd, father. They are to visit a picture, now. Let him have the car. He will drive along with Vatsala beside him.

RANGA RAO: Oh! Sure! (Hands over the key).

VATSALA: Next time onwards, Father, we won't trouble you. We'll be having our own car.

KAMALA: Vatsala!

VATSALA: (Realising her mistake) I'm sorry. Excuse me, Father.

RANGA RAO: That's all right. Run along, children. (Vatsala and Krishnaswamy depart). You are not merely a daughter, you are an angel. (Approaches his wife's photograph) Oh! sweet lady, bless your children. (Coming back to Kamala). I shall retire to Adyar and you may enter Sevagram).

KAMALA: (Slowly gets up, takes up the Veena. As if in a dream her supple fingers gently play with the strings. All her inner emotions express themselves through the Veena. A sad yet majestic music escapes through her fingers. Addressing the Veena). You are all I have! You will be with me wherever I may be. You are my life, my breath, my soul!

(Music continues. Kamala is lost in rapture).

RANGA RAO: (Lifts his head up, stares heavenwards). Thy will be done!

*Curtain*

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

*By Prof. M. Venkatarangaiya, M.A.*

THE lifting of the nearly one year old blockade of Berlin and the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers after a long interval of nearly twenty months are regarded as the most outstanding events of the month. The word has been greatly relieved at least for the time being of the fear of a third world war in the near future although it is too early to say whether there is a sound basis for such relief. The welcome which has throughout been accorded to the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers shows, however, how eagerly and anxiously the world is thirsting for peace, for stability, and for carrying the needed social and economic changes on an ordered non-violent basis.

One will be a confirmed optimist if one were to say that it will all be smooth sailing in the Council of Foreign Ministers and that the tension between the East and the West which began even while all the great powers were fighting a common foe could be completely eased and that they will work together in the interests of the world and humanity as a whole. The differences between Soviet Russia and the Western democracies are basic and fundamental and it requires a spirit of extraordinary toleration and even humility to get over them. The specific problem which the Council has to solve is the future of Germany and the conclusion of a treaty of peace with that country. Both parties have been saying that they want a unified and not a partitioned Germany, that it should be a democratic state and that all steps should be taken to prevent that country from again becoming a source of menace to Europe and to the rest of the world as she did in the days of Hitler. This kind of agreement between the East and the West was always there but when these generalities has to be given a concrete workable form differences arose in the past and it remains to be seen whether the present meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers would get over these differences and arrive at a solution satisfactory to all of them and also to the German people.

The main difficulty in the way of such a solution is that the Soviet's understanding of democracy is different from that of the Western powers. The latter mean by it a State where there is liberty for the individual, freedom for rival political parties to come into existence and carry on peaceful fighting with each other, and free elections. The Soviet, however, has a quite different conception of democracy. It does not attach much value to the fundamental rights of freedom of speech and movement in a society where there are acute economic inequalities. It does not believe in the need for rival political parties as they would undermine the organic unity of the State. Free elections in which candidates are set up by the different political parties and voters are given freedom to choose from among them has no meaning for it. It believes in one party rule in the period of transition between capitalism and communism. It is on this basis that it conducted the recent elections in the Eastern Zone of Germany—elections in which nearly forty per cent of

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

the voters voted against the single list of candidates put forward by the communist party.

The question therefore is whether the western powers would agree to give up their own view of democracy knowing that it would result in the government of United Germany being dominated by the communists and whether the Soviet would abandon its cherished view and allow bourgeois parties or Socialist parties to come into power. For it is now an axiomatic truth that communist governments would ally themselves with Russia and that Socialist or bourgeois governments with the Anglo-American powers. Each side is therefore anxious that united Germany should become its ally. This is the crux of the whole problem and all other aspects pale into insignificance by its side.

Not that these aspects are unimportant. On the other hand they also raise formidable issues. For instance, there is the question of the extent to which Germany should participate in the European Recovery Programme. The Western powers think that this is absolutely necessary and all along they have been proceeding on that hypothesis and have provided for Western Germany which has just now been constituted into a separate federal state being included in that programme. The Soviet, however, has been opposed to this programme and a Germany unified in accordance with her view of democracy will be a communist Germany having nothing to do with the programme of European recovery. This will make a wide difference to the success of the programme as a whole and would interfere with the way in which it has been able to make progress during the last two years. There are other questions also. There is the question of reparations from current production. There is also the question as to the extent to which the Soviet should participate in the control of the Ruhr industries.

The conclusion, therefore, that emerges from this brief reference to the issues with which the Council of Foreign Ministers will be faced is that it will be a miracle if any agreement is arrived at on them. Nothing short of a spiritual change based on "Unity in diversity" will bring about this miracle. The Soviet should be prepared to confine its activities to Europe east of Germany and to those regions in Asia where she had already established herself. The Anglo-American powers should also be equally satisfied with the influence they have in the other areas of the world and not try to undermine the foundations of the Soviet political and economic sphere. The idea that either the one or the other power should dominate the whole world to the exclusion of the other has to be completely abandoned. And on the basis of such self surrender should the two be prepared to work hand in hand for the maintenance of peace and for the orderly progress of the whole of humanity. It is a change of heart that is needed. And some doubts arise on this point when one sees how in the very first meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers which met to discuss the German problem the Soviet Foreign Minister raised the subject of the peace treaty with Japan. We have therefore to wait and watch the situation.

People are asking themselves why the Soviet has now agreed to lift



the Berlin blockade. The general answer that is given is that the blockade has failed and that its lifting by the Soviet is only a confession of her defeat. But the answer is not so simple as this. It is not so much the sense of defeat as the sense of victory in a larger and a wider field that seems to be responsible for this change in the Soviet attitude. It is the course of events in China and its repercussions on the countries of South-East Asia that really afford the key to this. The communists of China have now become the masters of the northern half. They are taking the key-towns which will bring them to the South and enable them to establish their dictatorship over the whole country—a country with a population of 450 millions and with natural resources which when developed with the technological skill and knowledge of the modern scientific age will make her the richest country in the world. So far as foreign policy is concerned a communist China will ally herself with Soviet Russia and not with the Anglo-American bloc. Naturally this has brought about a change in the tactics of Soviet Russia. It is quite true that during the period of the Berlin blockade the United States has consolidated herself in Western Europe and brought the Atlantic Pact into existence. But the communist success in China has brought plenty of compensation for all the loss that the Soviet might have suffered in Western Europe. The lifting of the Berlin blockade is therefore a sort of generous gesture made by Soviet Russia, a gesture which she can now afford to make without any serious material loss to her. It is the events in China that afford a truer explanation of the change in the Soviet policy.

These events are also responsible for several other changes that have become prominent. One is the more conciliatory attitude that the Dutch have adopted towards the Indonesian Republic. For three years they have been fighting with the Republic with a view to destroy it completely and re-establish their imperialism. They cared little for Asian opinion as voiced by Pandit Nehru and by the several conferences which he convened. They cared less for the opinion of the Security Council knowing as they did that it had no sanction based on physical force behind it. They have, however, changed their policy now. They are prepared to give Jogjakarta back to the Republican government and allow it to function as a government in some of its former territories. This may not bring complete peace to Indonesia but it may be taken as a first step in the re-orientation of Dutch policy in this part of the world. It is to be observed in this connection that Pandit Nehru's talks with the British Government during his recent visit to London had a great deal to do with this change in the Dutch policy.

A similar change is also noticeable in the French policy towards Indo-China. The negotiations between the French Government and the ex-Emperor Bao Dai have been completed and he has returned to Indo-China to form a new government. The French Parliament also passed a resolution abrogating the colonial status of Cochin-China and permitting it to be incorporated in the Viet Nam Republic. Bao Dai has made this a condition before setting up a national government. The exact im-

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plications of this alignment have to be clearly understood. The French and the other colonial powers are now beginning to see that the forces of nationalism have to be recognised and that any further delay in doing this will only help the expansion of the communist sphere of influence in South East Asia.

It is from this standpoint that events in Burma have to be examined. The government of Burma has not succeeded in quelling the Karen rebels or their communist allies. On the other hand a large area of Central Burma has been lost and a rival state is being set up there. In addition to this there is a steady infiltration of Chinese communists from across the frontiers and the civil war in Burma is, for all practical purposes like the civil war in China, a war between the communists and the anti-communists. If things are allowed to take their course there is the danger that the government of Burma might collapse and communism become firmly entrenched there. It speaks highly of the statesmanship of the present Burmese Premier that in this hour of danger he has not stood on mere prestige but has come out boldly to ask for the help of the neighbouring countries like India, Pakistan and Ceylon and also of Britain. The Governments of these States have now agreed to extend their aid to Burma. In doing this they have been prompted not merely by the fact that they have to depend on that country for the supplies of rice but also by the fact that the triumph of communism there might threaten their own stability. What India, Pakistan and Ceylon now require is peace which will enable them to reconstruct their economy on the basis of ordered progress. They are therefore interested in arresting the further progress of communism outside China. And it is from this standpoint that the course of events in that country has today a world-wide significance.

Ideologically there are now two factors contending for world domination. One is communism and the other is democratic socialism. In every country of Western Europe and in the countries of South East Asia and to some extent in other countries also the fight between the two has reached a decisive stage. In Asia, especially, the revolutions which are being witnessed—the revolutions which in their first manifestations are anti-imperialistic—are both national and social. While the nationalistic aspect appeals to all sections of people in each of these countries it is the social and economic aspect that is more attractive to the masses. And unless this aspect is handled immediately with great skill, imagination and statesmanship there is a danger that communistic forces will gain ground. National governments established in these areas should not merely try to preserve peace and order but direct their activities to economic reconstruction on socialistic and democratic lines. The struggle that is going on in the world today is in the main a struggle between the totalitarian forces of communism and the forces of democratic freedom directed to the peaceful establishment of socialism. They are like different religions and it ought to be possible for both of them to exist side by side just as different religions are existing side by side. The success of the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers may make this a possibility. •

## FELO DE SE

*By Mukunda*

SPEAK, troubling Wind, speak!  
To obey him,  
or not to obey him;  
to yield and die,  
or to revolt in disgust,  
desiring an unnatural end?

To bear children for a beast  
whose visage is human  
but whose mind is foul as a harlot's womb,  
or to be a secret prostitute  
gratifying the whims of a filthy mind?  
Speak, troubling Wind, speak!

To believe in chastity!  
What is it to be chaste  
when creative act is depressing?  
To betray him,  
or to be impure with a resolution—  
not to shun Death?  
Death is impure,  
yet is it purer than Birth.

To deny him,  
or to deny impurity?  
To deny him is unjust,  
patience rebels;  
to deny existence is possible  
when leprous thoughts career  
to culminate in a tragic act!  
Madness has purified impurity!  
Speak no more, troubling Wind, speak no more!

# NATURE IN BHAGAVADGITA

By Dr. P. Nāgaraja Rao, M.A. D.Litt.

## I

BEFORE describing the Gita-idea of Nature, we should know to what conceptions it is opposed to. Nature, according to the materialist, is a process with no plan at its heart and no point in its evolution. It is described as the unthinking mother of man. It works out as it likes, some of its movements are predictable and others indeterminate. Science has applied itself to certain aspects of Nature and has discovered the laws governing those phenomena. This does not mean that the entire universe is law-abiding. Some parts of it are organized and others are just cinders. At the heart of reality there is no purpose or intelligent design.

The process of Nature is alike indifferent to man's woe and weal. An empirical investigation of the process of Nature reveals no moral principle at the back of its workings. In the words of Hardy: "A blind unheeding hand is guiding us; it is a blind, unfeeling and unthinking will" and is indifferent alike to human happiness and human suffering.<sup>1</sup> This force drags the universe at its heels, furthers some human interests without purpose and thwarts others without malignity. Bertrand Russell gives expression to this view in his celebrated papers *The Freeman's Worship and the Essence of Religion*.<sup>2</sup>

Russell argues that Nature on its mechanical side goes its own way. It cannot be completely brought to our bearings. Even the evolutionary process does not exhibit any unmistakable purpose. We see waste on a large scale. T. H. Huxley in the *Romanes Lectures* (1893) describes the cosmic process as a kind of gladiatorial theory of existence "where the strongest, the most self-assertive tend to tread down the weaker. It demands ruthless self-assertion and thrusts aside, treading down all competitors." The law of existence is the survival of the fittest, not the fitting in of the many to survive. Thus the naturalist sees an inscrutable, crass causality working in Nature. It runs to no known or knowable end. So man cannot rely on it for his guidance in his ethical life.

If the second law of thermo-dynamics is true or to be trusted, the world will achieve a condition of eventless stagnation. All energy will be evenly distributed and the universe will come to a rest in an uniform mass of cosmic radiation. Such a world-prospect does not evoke or inspire any religious or moral feeling in us. In the words of C. E. M.

<sup>1</sup> See the three following poems of Hardy: (i) "Nature's Questioning", (ii) "New Year's Eve", (iii) "God-forgotten."

<sup>2</sup> See Russell: *Selected Papers* pp. 1 to 15, and *Hibbert Journal*, Oct. 1912.

Joad, the last inhabitant of the world will exhale to the unfriendly sky his last breath and he will remember nothing about our art, literature, or genius. There is a definite antithesis between the facts of Nature and the values of man. A few of the ultra-rationalistic scientists deny the very existence of value and treat man also as a piece of matter, the only difference being that he is a bit complicated. Thus they deny God, immortality, soul and its salvation as gross forms of superstitions to be discarded. The materialists exhort us to bring Nature part by part under human control.

There are a few other scientists who believe that there are values which the mind of man cherishes and that they are not governed by the laws of nature i.e., matter and motion. Such values are responsible for civilizations. The values are Truth, the Good, Beauty, and Utility. They are not super-historical, nor time-transcending objects. They are manifested here on this earth in the actions of men. Russell argues that man's freedom consists in cherishing these values ere the blow falls. The universe is most often hostile, and the man of wisdom must not prostrate before its mighty power. "In action, in desire, we must submit perpetually to the tyranny of outside forces; but in thought, in aspiration we are free from our fellowmen, free from the petty planet on which our bodies impotently crawl, free even while we live from the tyranny of death."

Thus there is the antithesis between Nature and man's values, and one has nothing to do with the other. There are a few other scientists who look upon Nature as unfolding its potentiality slowly through the corridors of time into matter, life, mind, and in the supermen. They trace these manifestations as due to the *elan vital* in nature. Some like Bergson believe in creative evolution and do not consider that all the evolutes are prefigured in the unmanifest Nature. Evolution is a creative process, and not a mechanical unfolding of what is already contained in Nature. There is an immanent teleology. Mechanism in evolution cannot account for all the process. Yet others speak of an emergent evolution and describe the process as in travail struggling to produce the Deity at the end. But one important doctrine common to all the twentieth century evolutionist philosophers is that they find Nature a self-sufficient cause for the creation. They believe in the autonomy of Nature. They do not go beyond the historical present. They equate Reality with what is perceived by the senses and grasped by reason. They confine the real to the Space-Time frame. Some of our contemporary scientific philosophers derive all that is from Space-Time and Nature. They explain and interpret the natural process of the universe by its own principles. They do not seek it elsewhere. They assert the independence of Nature and do not go beyond it. They think historically and not transcendently. They identify the ultimate with what happens in time and in space. They do not recognize the eternal or the timeless. They know progress which is in time and not perfection which is timeless and super-historical.

## NATURE IN BHAGAVADGITA

### II

The Gita-idea of Nature (Prakriti) is not in agreement with any of the descriptions of the evolutionist philosophers. Nature is the material matrix from which the things of the world emerge due to the Lord's creative power. Prakriti is not antithetical to man. It is not malignant and wicked to man. It is not indifferent to human woe and happiness. It is not neutral and pointless in its process. It is not chaotic and independent of all laws. There is a definite law governing the process of Nature "from the movements of atoms to the happenings in History." Nature is not dreadful nor is it self-sufficient. Its workings cannot be fully accounted for from its own principles. It is not autonomous and self-sufficient. It has a design, a purpose, a teleology, a law governing it. Man and Nature do not work at cross purposes, they are complimentary when the measure of co-operation is known.

The Gita-idea of Prakriti is very close to the description of the same in the Sankhyan system of Philosophy, the one great difference being that Prakriti in the Gita is not an independent principle as in the Sankhyan system. The origination of the world is attributed by the Sankhyans to the spontaneous evolution of Prakriti. In the Gita Prakriti and the Lord together are responsible for the origination of the universe. Non-sentient Prakriti by itself has no power, nor does the Lord create the world out of Nothing. Prakriti is the material cause (Upadana Karana) and the Lord is the instrumental cause (Nimitta Karana). But there is nothing in the world which is not of the nature of Prakriti. There is nothing in heaven or earth, among the Gods or men that has not Prakriti as its constitutive stuff."<sup>1</sup> Prakriti in the Gita is described as the power or the energy of the Lord, and Lord is the Energiser.<sup>2</sup> He is the Mayin and Prakriti is his Maya.

The great Sankara posits Brahman as the chief philosophical category and the only one which cannot be adequately described in terms of any attribute, because there is nothing besides it. All description is relational and mediate. So we require for it at least three terms, the two terms correlated and a relation. As there is nothing besides Brahman in terms of which it can be described, it is said to be indeterminate. In fact, but for Brahman, we have no basis for existence or sustenance. Sankara holds the view that Brahman when confronted with activity and creation is Isvara or God. That is, when Brahman is conditioned by Prakriti he becomes the God of religion. He takes hold of Prakriti and harnesses it to the purpose of creation. The Prakriti of the Gita has two aspects. Prakriti as characterising and conditioning Brahman which activates it is called Para (Higher Prakriti). This has no taint and does not bind Him. It is made of Suddha Sattva. Theists hold the view that the physical frame of the Lord in his avatars is made of Suddha Sattva. The Lord repeatedly tells us that the activities of Prakriti do

<sup>1</sup> Gita, XVIII—40.

<sup>2</sup> Svetasvara Upanisad, IV—40.

## TRIVENI

not affect Him at all. Prakriti is dependent on Him. He is independent of it. He bears them and is not in them.

Now let us see what is the character and nature of the Lower Prakriti with which the Lord creates the universe. It is a complex entity of three Gunas: Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. In the fourteenth chapter we have an elaborate description of the nature of these three constitutive elements of Prakriti and their functions. The centre of our consciousness, the divine in us, the spirit in man is impaired, overlaid and confused with thick layers of unreality by the binding power of Prakriti. Prakriti is responsible for bondage and the separatist feelings in us. All activity is the result of the association of Prakriti. It is Prakriti that prompts men to God-eclipsing activities. He needs to liberate himself from the chains of Prakriti. Prakriti Sambandha (getting related to Prakriti) is Samsara. The first of the three elements, Sattva, is shining by its pure light. It makes us long for happiness and knowledge. It enslaves the happy. When it is predominant the senses are clear and they are in a concert pitch, perfect for their respective functions. It is mostly divine. Rajas is the passionate in man. It thirsts after pleasures and possession and hungers for action. It is responsible for greed and restlessness and a never-ending chain of unregenerate activities. It is never still and ever agitates our minds and muscles. When Rajas predominates we have the man of action without vision and religious faith. Tamas is responsible for ignorance, sluggishness, stupor, and dullness. It bewilders men and keeps them in perpetual delusion. Men go dark and feel stupid when Tamas predominates. Every action is the work of the Gunas. The individual soul identifies himself through delusion with the workings of Prakriti and so he experiences anguishes and thrills. As long as the delusion is there, man is bound to think that he acts and not Prakriti. But with the onset of the recollection it is Prakriti that acts, there is an end of the delusion. Lord Krishna, through his Gospel, helped Arjuna to regain his lost memory of the Great Truth. The Lord is the directive force of the Prakriti. It obeys His behests. It is moral and law-abiding. The world is not *amoral* and a chance-universe nor is it the evolution of an unthinking matter without any agent. It is a purposive process and its workings are informed by the laws and purposes of God. It is perfectly pre-established—the course of the stars and the sun: the flash of the lightning and every detail—as to sustain moral values and help the spiritual aspirant to attain it. Nature is not unfriendly to man nor is the universe hostile in spiritual aims. The Lord prescribes the moral and physical laws of the universe. So the world is a valley, in the Keatsean phrase, “for the art of soul-making.”







